economics...culture...politics...religion...behaviour...
debate...perception...human...rational...cause...effect...
bigotry...Humanism...censorship...habitat...progress...
migration...racism...population...power...conservation...
species...control...xenophobia...sustainable...growth...
aid...ecology...cyberspace...production...abundance...
fraternity...liberty...equality...industry...children..

# Soliloquies of
# Concern & Action
## (in a mixed-up world)

crime...reform...society..groups..planet...knowledge..
.love...prejudice...education...capitalism...
morality...selfishness...World Government...
nationalism...asylum...marriage...abortion...sex-
education...atheism...affluence...New Secular
Church...death...human rights...dogma...
charity...parenting...poverty...obsolescence..Mammon..
.rationalism...tribalism...devolution...globalism...
hell...democracy...enlightenment...children's
rights...heaven...commercialism...hope...employment...
conflict...war...cause and effect...freedom...
expression...justice...truth...allegience...
evangelism...oppression...inequity...media...party-
politics...institutions...bureaucracy...creativity..

## Robert Shayler

...discrimination...competition...authority...virtue..
.skills...heresy...schools...school assemblies...
harmony...peace  indoctrination...profligacy ...
ideology...trans-nationalism... worship...
paradox...pregnancy...materialism...wealth...
technology...global village......privilege... nation
states...sovereignty...established church... cultural
diversity...future

# Soliloquies of Concern and Action
# (in a mixed-up world)
## by
## Robert Shayler

## Acknowledgements

# CONTENTS

# **Foreword**

The universal turmoil of interacting cause and effect ensures, as it always has done, an unstable world, in which philosophies, empires, social systems, plants, animals, climates, my thoughts, the earth itself, whatever, are but transitory, changing phenomena, with terminal existences. The writing of my soliloquy seems futile in this cosmic ocean. Why then bother? Why care?

As a member of that dominant minority of the human species which enjoys the disproportionate affluence and freedom of a western democracy, I have been well-placed to indulge in the good life, and this I have done in good measure. I could just leave it at that and wallow in my blessings, but I can't. This is because I am aware that the quality of my life has depended upon circumstances created by others both past and present. Having five grandchildren whose future health, happiness and prosperity are far from guaranteed, and about whom I worry, serves to reinforce that awareness. **I can see no greater moral imperative than to at least <u>try</u> to improve the circumstances of others, particularly those in need, the younger generation and those yet to be born.**

 I am at that time in life, which must come to all who survive the ambushes of accident and circumstance, when the shuffling off of this mortal coil is much closer than when it was first imposed on me. I am in the last-chance saloon for doing something useful. Hopefully the following thoughts , half-baked though they may be, will contribute something to improving the human condition and help young readers in particular to broaden their perception of this complex world and to construct their own moral philosophy on which to base their future actions. The future is in their hands.

I am also certain that all readers will subscribe to the principle on which this book is written, namely the necessity for the free expression and exchange of thoughts and ideas in the search for knowledge, truth and a better future.

# Introduction

Little red books imposed on closed societies by dictators appear to bring about revolution quickly. This little book has no obvious authority or coercion behind it but is no less ideological or revolutionary in its intent.

I do not claim intellectual rigour in what I have written - I am not an intellectual. I cannot quote learned experts, (although, no doubt my thinking has been influenced by what I have read and heard), nor offer many facts and figures from sociological research. I have no letters after my name, which bestow credence and authority on my utterances. (My B.Ed.Hons. has little relevance to teaching, let alone the wider issues addressed in this book.)

The evidence for my assertions is primarily my subjective experience of 70+ years on this planet - years in which I have witnessed the relentless overcrowding, attrition and deterioration of my own beautiful island home of Great Britain, the untenable, destructive advance of human development on a global scale, and the unabated tenacity of the age-old cancers of fraternal conflict and selfishness. (see (a) below)

My authority is the imperative and right of everyone in a free society to speak their mind for the common good, and to contribute their own catalyst of ideas to the melting pot of experience, in order to bring about appropriate change.

I hope this book does not lose me friends or contribute in any way to the problems it seeks to put right. I have pursued lines of thought which challenge patterns of established belief and behaviour and will certainly unsettle and upset many, although I don't think I need to apologise for making hackles rise. In mitigation, I would ask the reader to be aware of the book's intended message of hope, which is based upon the simple concept of love and respect for each other and for the entire natural world.

As you read, it will be apparent that I perceive theistic belief systems to be illusory and disingenuous. You may therefore assume that I want rid of them. This would be an incorrect interpretation. I do assert that theistic religions are a major cause of deep social division, suffering and conflict, as well as their opposites. I also believe that rational thought (see (b) below) and the pursuit of truth, whilst not foolproof, are preferable to religious superstition. However, human minds are complex and diverse and respond to their perceived world in all sorts of ways. I would defend the moral right of individuals, free from indoctrination or coercion, to believe in and worship a god of their choosing, together with

other like-minded consenting adults, so long as they do not hurt or close the minds of others by so doing, do not exercise religious privilege or power, and respect the right of others to make different choices.

The world is dynamic and forever changing. Before completion of the book, I found it necessary to rewrite some of it as a result of changing circumstances. Almost certainly, the unfolding human story will continue to render some aspects of it out-dated or inappropriate, but I hope that much of what I have written will have enduring relevance.

Please read this book from start to finish. Whilst separate chapters appear to deal with discrete issues, they are but an attempt to break down a fairly complex thesis into manageable pieces, each of which depends on preceding, and predicates following, chapters.

In Part 1, I have attempted to show some of the ways in which established economic, religious, political and cultural patterns of belief and action, whilst bringing undoubted benefits to some, are also major causes of harm to others and to the planet. There has always been this paradox and there always will be, but now the need is urgent, as never before, to change these causative patterns in order to shift the balance of their consequences more towards maximum global human and environmental benefits and away from satisfying short term and minority interests.

Part 2 responds to this urgency and to the fact that, apart from unavoidable natural events and catastrophies, the human species is the architect of its own future. I therefore propose some changes, perceptions and strategies which collectively might form the basis of a new order, and help to secure a better tomorrow.

Whilst my intention has been to explore fundamental human values and perceptions, which have universal relevance, I have inevitably drawn considerably upon my experience in the U.K. to illustrate points or develop arguments, and of course my understanding of wider global issues must inevitably be influenced by the subjective perceptions of those who report them. I fully realise that to extrapolate and rely on my own subjective, micro perception, to arrive at universal truths and principles is naive, but this predicament is surely the lot of philosophers as well, so I am in good company.

I am mindful that I am simply thinking aloud. Without the rigour of interaction with other thinking, soliloquy is bound to be flawed. It is also wasted unless it is shared or acted upon. And so, the humble purpose of this book is simply to share my soliloquy with others, particularly young people, in the hope that the ideas contained herein will help them to extend the range of their perceptions of the issues addressed and,

through the osmosis of debate, to contribute to a way forward out of the confusion and conflict of our times. If they also influence the priorities of those with the power to expedite  social change, then so much the better.

(a) Selfishness:   It could probably be argued that all human behaviour is motivated by selfish needs, but I don't want to get into that debate. Rather, I want to make the point that selfishness, like all behaviour, can have good and/or bad consequences.

There are circumstances in which selfish behaviour can be seen as a good thing.  For example, at a basic level, it is the driving force behind the urge to live and survive at times of danger. At a more social level, working for a living in order to benefit oneself and one's family, could be regarded as taking responsibility for one's own needs and not being parasitic on state welfare, as well as contributing through taxation to the welfare of others.

But there are circumstances in which self-interested behaviour can be a bad thing. For example, someone who trades in drugs in order to make easy money, is certainly instrumental in the human misery and crime that follow from that action.

**When those who behave selfishly show disregard or are blind to the harmful consequences of their actions, selfishness becomes a major cause of so much that is bad in human affairs.**

It is this kind of selfishness that underlies many of the issues raised in Part 1.

(b) Rational Thought:  An enduring assertion of Humanists and free-thinkers is that people should base their attitudes and behaviour on rational thought (reason), rather than religious superstition or dicta. Such a hope is both laudable and entirely understandable given the great harm that comes from the various forms of religious bigotry.

On the other hand, that assertion seems to imply that rationality is somehow pure and free from bias and that if only everyone were rational, there would inevitably be greater convergence of perception. Concord would therefore replace discord in human affairs.

But  in practice, rationality is a subjective process emanating from and shaped by the perceptions, the moral assumptions and the purpose of the thinker. It can also cause great harm. It is not enough to say that someone is being rational or irrational. Such statements must be qualified.

For example, it was once pointed out to me that, in the context of war, from the perspective of a warlord, the mass extermination of the perceived enemy, in order to achieve a "final solution", could be seen as entirely rational, albeit a highly immoral  act when seen from a different perspective. This is an extreme example but illustrates the point that

implicit or explicit in any rationale, which seeks to justify action or attitude, are supporting subjective moral assumptions.

People and groups frequently construct their own subjective rationales and supporting moral arguments to justify their actual behaviour. Whether it be (say) the plausible excuses of a pregnant mother who smokes, or the economic rationales of a government, which allows the destruction of rainforest, or whatever, the consequences can be devastating. The capacity to do this is another common factor, together with selfishness, in much of human wrongdoing.

**If the promise of a new world, based on rationalism, is to be realised, (and there is surely no better basis), then there would need to be a widespread construction of overriding, shared, common-place rationales. If that new world is to be one of peace, abundance for all, with the human race living in harmony with itself and with a sustainable planet, then those rationales would have to be shaped by shared moral imperatives which see those ideals as paramount.**

# <u>PART 1</u>
# Soliloquies of Concern

## The Global Village - A New Enlightenment

"The Global Village" is perhaps the most significant social concept to emerge in recent years. The notion that the entire human race shares a common habitat, should it ever gain common credence, offers perhaps the best hope there is of bringing under control a plague, which is seriously afflicting the earth - that is the rampant, voracious spread of the human animal. For control is necessary if, for no other reason, the human race itself is to be sustained in the manner to which it wishes to be accustomed.

It also compels us to redefine our concept of "neighbour" to include <u>all</u> living and future human beings, and establishes the imperatives of mutual dependence and responsibility on a global scale.

It also demands that a sacred commitment to the conservation of the planet, should drive and inform our individual and corporate behaviour.

Ultimately, if human action is to be predicated on the "Global Village" assumption, the morality and wisdom of the established strategies by which human-kind organises its affairs, must be called into question. Far-reaching, indeed revolutionary consequences may follow, but changes must be made. If human-kind doesn't cooperate and coordinate its own long-term welfare, then self-interest and indulgence at personal, organisational and national levels will continue to lay waste the habitat which sustains us all, and lead to ever more inequity, suffering and conflict.

Given the overwhelming range of problems which daily confront us, the high ideals of the "Global Village" model might seem wishful fantasy and unattainable, but the very least we must do is use that idealism to bring fresh thinking and a sense of urgency to our attempts to solve those problems and to shape the future, in the interests of everyone.

Thanks to modern communications technology, there can be few people unaware of the turmoil and confusion which characterize human existence at the start of the 21st. century. It is easy to dismiss this as historically normal, but the scale and scope of our current problems are unprecedented and perhaps terminal in their implications.

Within and between tribal, religious, ethnic and political groups, the cancers of hate, suspicion, self-interest and internecine conflict fester,

erupt and smother reason for generations. Voracious human consumption drains the planet of limited and finite natural resources. Flora and fauna, including humans, suffer and die from environmental pollution and exploitation. Species-extinction is routine. Drugs pervert and end countless lives. Drought, famine, pestilence, disease - the old enemies - seem as widespread and catastrophic as ever. Roads and urban, industrial and agricultural development alter and destroy habitats and landscapes on a massive scale. Violent crime against property and persons is relentless and commonplace. Pornography, in blatant , pervasive and insidious forms, contaminate the minds of the innocent and the culpable alike. Scientific discovery advances too quickly, reducing what was once seen as the prerogative of God to common principles and processes, and raising ethical/moral problems with no easy or absolute solutions.

The catalogue is endless and any thinking adult will confirm that it evokes a sense of unease, if not alarm, at the continuing failure of the human race to achieve universal harmony, prosperity and individual fulfilment <u>together with</u> a sustainable, healthy and biologically-diverse global environment.

Television, radio and other media routinely ensure that we are all confronted with, and informed on, the selected problematic issues of the day. For those who choose to see and hear, the effect on the psyche can be profound. If we are not desensitized by this constant barrage, then our consciences are tortured by a morass of cultural, moral and practical dilemmas, which can often deny rational thought, or we are frustrated with our own impotency in the face of urgent need for change.

Born of this frustration, many voluntary groups have formed in order to influence political and personal action for the better. From Greenpeace to Amnesty International they are tireless in their essential damage-limitation efforts and in raising public awareness. People are moved by their appeals and rightly direct their indignation and action at their immediate, tangible but fragmented battles - a habitat here, effluent pollution there, 'Save the Whale' or 'Save the Children'. Sadly, only the symptoms are being separately addressed, but not the deep, underlying causes, which lie in the local, national and global systems of religion, economics, politics and culture.

**If we truly believe that we <u>all</u> have a moral responsibility for the welfare of each other, our children and future generations, then the taken-for-granted dogmas and practices of these systems must be put on trial and any impediments to essential reform exposed and  addressed.**

Vested interests, superstition and bigotry should not be allowed to constrain open, honest, detached appraisal, out of which will come

new, more-appropriate moral imperatives. A **New Order** is urgently required. It must be preceded and nurtured by a **New Enlightenment**.

# Population - Habitat Imbalance.
# The Price of Progress.

As the human race compulsively advances towards its ill-defined, open-ended future, it exploits, damages or destroys not just its own species, but also the full diversity of living organisms, with which it shares this planet.

The law of diminishing returns, as exemplified by cows in a field, is well known, but the analogy to humans is apposite and bears looking at in more detail. The logic is simple but powerful in its persuasion.

The starting point is a few cows in a large field. These cows could trample over their food and spread droppings freely, and yet still have ample resources for an excellent quality of life. Introduce more cows to the field and a point will be reached when the per-capita food supply becomes insufficient to sustain healthy, well-fed cows. Continue to add more cows and introduce also the vagaries of drought and adverse growing conditions, plus competition between animals, and you have a recipe for inequity and suffering as well as aggression and serious habitat damage.

If the farmer of these hypothetical cows wishes to maintain a healthy herd then he has two options. He might make more land available for pasture. He can only do that by 'not" using the additional land for something else. In other words, there must be a trade-off with other habitats and land uses. Or he can manage the situation by reducing cow-numbers to an optimum level, commensurate with the available on-going resources.

Now let us apply the analogy to the human race. Modern man's way of life is much more complex, demanding and damaging to the environment than that of cows. Pursuit of increasing per-capita consumption and competition for resources are endemic and even perceived as virtues in our economic value system. Unlike grass, some of our crucial energy and material resources are finite and non-sustainable, and can have terrible polluting effects on land, water and air.

For many millions, who experience life-long hunger, poverty and hardship, the law of diminishing returns has been all too real for a long time. Global-warming compounds the problem. But, as a species, we continue to reproduce and multiply without reference to the short or long-term ability of our habitat-management to provide for future demand. Indeed, baby-making in some countries is even officially encouraged for political, economic, religious or cultural reasons.

Historically, there have been great exports of populations, often with terrible consequences for the environments and the indigenous peoples of the new lands. Apart from the ruthless appropriation of Tibet by China, these great movements seemed to have run their course. But economic migration is still happening and growing, as people from less developed countries seek affluence in Europe and America. This phenomenon is manifest not least in Britain, where this already over-crowded island has allowed in millions of such immigrants for alleged economic reasons. As drought-stricken countries fail to support their hungry and thirsty people, this movement is likely to grow to a flood. In turn, any country which absorbs greater numbers must inevitably experience greater demands on its habitat and a reduced per-capita share of its indigenous resources. On the other hand countries with populations which are small relative to their natural resources have greater leeway and will therefore be better placed to survive such natural or man-made disasters.

The alteration and destruction of wildlife habitats to accommodate the demands of humans is relentless, insidious and seemingly unstoppable. Man's ability to seriously and permanently foul his own nest increases with the by-products of the rampant technologies of the industrial and agricultural processes, which sustain and satisfy his indulgences. Such trade-off costs do not appear on the economic balance sheets by which human progress is measured.

With public awareness of ozone-depletion, global warming, acid rain, air/sea pollution, declining fish stocks, reducing bio-diversity etc., it is only recently that the demands of excessive human population have been perceived as threatening on a global scale.

Unfortunately, the autonomous, competing, self-centred nations of the world have great difficulty in managing their own internal habitat-population balance, let alone participating in global problem - solving. Within and across national boundaries, the dogmas of religion, politics and economics, constrain belief and action in ways which hinder attempts to address over-population.

Driven and rewarded by the selfish, short-term goals of Mamon, or simply to survive, the affluent and poor peoples of the world plunder and distribute resources in their own interests, and pass on the hidden costs and harmful consequences of their actions to others. For them, the notion of global (or even national) accountability to present or future generations, if it is thought about at all, is but a theoretical irritant, with no relevance to their economic rationales or survival imperatives of the present.

Despite the vast scale of this self-inflicted carnage and environmental embezzlement, the human species seems lemming-like in its response. It is a cruel paradox that, at a time when human ingenuity seems almost god-like in its power and potential to change and shape our lives, we are carried along by forces which are of our own creation but beyond our control. Like the sorcerer's apprentice, we have started something which has a momentum of its own. Unfortunately there are no wizards to break the curse and reverse the tide. The huge and ever-growing human population demands ever-growing resources. (In July, 2008, the US Census Bureau put the world population at 6.7billion and rising rapidly.)

**Without significant population-reduction and hence reduced total consumption and reduced habitat damage, bringing to <u>all</u> people that level of profligacy and material abundance enjoyed by a minority of affluent societies, will literally cost the earth and cannot be sustained in perpetuity**. Slowing the growth rate or simply holding population numbers steady will not be sufficient. Even in Great Britain, where population size was virtually static, (before immigration numbers changed the situation for the worse),  road building, destruction of wildlife habitats, urban expansion and the depletion of natural resources, (e.g. water, fish and oil), continued apace. The prospect of similar "progress" on a global scale is too awful to contemplate.

The Chinese experience provides the writing on the wall, for those who choose to read it. It has felt the alarming effects of population growth. One partial solution has been to open up and plunder new "pastures" in Tibet, where Chinese migrants have been sent to settle, thus making Chinese imperialism irreversible by sheer weight of numbers. As was the case with the indigenous peoples of North and South America, the Tibetans have been dispossessed. Their way of life, which existed in harmony with the environment has been devastated.

China, as well as extending its habitat into Tibet by force of arms, is compelled to impose harsh fertility controls on its far-from-affluent people, in a desperate attempt to simply stabilize numbers. Somehow the rest of the world looks on and assumes it won't happen to them. Added to this, China is now embracing the capitalist economic system and the rest of the world is just beginning to worry about diminishing global per-capita returns ,as it consumes ever-growing supplies of fossil fuels and adds vast amounts of pollutants to the world's atmosphere.

There are those who see no problem. They point to the food mountains of Europe and the agro - revolution, and argue that the world can easily feed itself. Certainly harsh agro - chemical and other measures

have bought us (well, some of us) time, and sustained some of the runaway population growth, and it may be that genetically - modified plants will extend this bounty to the extra billions that will arrive over the next few decades, but population concern is not just about per - capita food availability. It is also about all the other environmental and human consequences of providing for excessive numbers of profligate consumers.

**Reversing the malignant growth and spread of the human species has to be the single most important action to be taken by the people of the world. Without it, all other remedial action will be ultimately little more than darning the holes in a rotten sock.**

# Condemned to Life –
# The Immorality of Birth

Nothing could be more natural than sexual intercourse and childbirth. And there is nothing more beautiful than a healthy new-born baby in the arms of its young mother and father, who love each other and the wonderful, innocent, helpless little miracle they have created, especially if the circumstances augur well for its future nurture and happiness. Such a scenario is surely the moral entitlement of every child.

However, in so far as individual babies and children are deprived of any part or all of that entitlement, that beauty is tempered by some degree of sadness or perhaps even replaced by pain or anger in anyone with a conscience.

Morality is a human construct. Behind moral judgment lie concepts such as fairness, justice, loyalty, honour, honesty, empathy, tolerance, equity, compassion, bravery, kindness, etc. - usually in reference to human behaviour towards other humans, animals or even perhaps plants.

Human action can only be judged 'morally right' in relation to a beneficiary. (I am discounting those judgments which are predicated on a religious faith which sees 'right' behaviour as simply conforming to the perceived will of some imagined god.)

There can be no logical moral argument for the creation of human life, which sees the new life itself as the beneficiary of that act of creation.

More often than not, the creation of human life is either a careless, a wanton or a selfish act, or is intended to serve the interests or purposes of someone other than the child.

. From the point of view of the new-born, its creation was an immoral act, in that no child has ever asked, wanted or chosen to be born. All children are brought into this unstable and uncertain world without their agreement and with no guarantees of lifelong health and happiness. Indeed, for very large numbers of them, the act of creation commits them to a lifetime of suffering, insecurity, stress and struggle. Millions of children die each year from starvation and malnutrition-related diseases, as any 'Save the Children Fund' begging letter will confirm. Mental or physical handicap, hardship, poverty, neglect, exploitation and abuse are also some of the sad circumstances into which many children are delivered. This moral dilemma weighs heavily on the conscience of every caring parent whose child suffers.

It is true that parents can give their child an abundance of profound love whatever the child's circumstances and their capacity for doing so is often cited as an argument for banning abortion. But what of the mother who, if she were honest, might say "I'm sorry you contracted Aids when you were in my tummy darling. You may not live a long life and its going to be unpleasant for you, but I love you so its O.K. A little brother is on the way. I don't want him. He was an accident. I should have been more careful. Life is going to be harder for us all when he is around. To be truthful, Daddy doesn't love you or care. He's gone."

This hypothetical case may seem in bad taste. It hurts to think of it. But it is not unrealistic and is certainly a more hopeful scenario than some. Anti-abortionists who claim to speak 'for' the unborn child, must also make clear what they would say 'to' the born child who suffers.

The usual justifications and rationales for deliberately having children are basically selfish and use the child as a means to an end. From the child's point of view, it must be immoral to have been conceived and born in order to :-

(i)  achieve economic objectives. (e.g. to provide for parents in old age, or to sustain national economic expansion);

(ii)  achieve emotional objectives. (e.g. to consolidate the relationship between man and woman, or to satisfy the craving for motherhood, or to overcome loneliness);

(iii) achieve religious objectives. (e.g. in response to the expectations, needs or superstitions of religion);

(iv)  achieve social objectives. (e.g. to be seen to conform to perceived social norms, or to continue the family line.)

Such reasons are rationalised into moral virtues and social attributes. Social, religious and sometimes political conditioning ensure that they go largely unchallenged. And so the seeds of population growth are literally sown in abundance.

**On our overcrowded, vulnerable planet, uncontrolled, unrestrained human procreation can also be regarded as anti-social and immoral from the point of view of all other existing and future people as well as that of the new-born. Large families are not a cause for celebration. Two children should do.**

Any recognition of the immorality of procreation must call into question religious and political dogmas which oppose contraception and birth control or promote childbirth as a god-given blessing and a religious, patriotic or social duty. The world-wide socio-economic consequences of such dogma for poor people and their children is well known. But promoting childbirth, together with child-indoctrination, are the primary means by which religions sustain their fraternal membership

through the generations, and their market share in the face of competition. (This institutional propensity for self-perpetuation is a powerful shaper of dogma).

It is depressing to think that a few well-chosen words from one man could have prevented the untold poverty, suffering and death which has historically resulted from millions of people obeying the sacred religious duty to procreate and to not use contraception. But the culpability of the Roman Catholic Church, significant though it is, is just one example of how the self-interest of powerful institutions can work against the greater good, and of how religious moral stances can be, by definition, unreasoning and blind to their own immoral consequences.

One cannot ignore the very real distaste which is felt by those who oppose abortion. To them, life, from the moment of conception onwards, is self-evidently sacred - end of argument. They would assert that no one has the right to take away innocent human life, particularly if that life is a defenceless baby growing in the womb. The moral problem is confused by religious superstitions, which are relevant only to those who believe them, but the common factor of all anti-abortion argument is that foetuses have a æ°right to lifeæ±. However, to make that right sacred in all circumstances is to focus on the principle rather than the individual life which it is intended to benefit. It could (and often does) lead to a life in which a child's right to health, happiness, love, etc. is denied.

It is too simplistic for the self-righteous to claim moral superiority with regard to abortion. **The millions upon millions of foetuses, which have been aborted, would have been millions upon millions of unwanted babies, with their future welfare, health or happiness far from guaranteed. In such immoral, cruel circumstances, it is not far-fetched to regard them as being condemned to life, and <u>abortion as their right.</u>**

# Affluence - The Normalising of Decadence

Our knowledge, thinking, morals, beliefs and behaviour are all influenced by the significant norms of the cultural milieu in which we are raised and operate.

In a hypothetical, small, isolated forest tribal community, the significant cultural norms are likely to be established and consistent with the long-term needs of the tribe to survive and to live in harmony with each other and their natural habitat. Conformity with those norms is likely to be strong within the family and the wider community, and reinforced by traditional attitudes, folk lore, ritual etc.

The cooperative, conserving norms of such a group could not contrast more with those of modern affluent societies. The latter are very complex organisational structures. Their habitat requirements are on a global scale and individuals are often remote from the environmental/social damage their behaviour causes. Their significant cultural norms include, as taken-for-granted virtues, the acquisition of wealth, the freedom and obligation to pursue vested personal and fraternal interest and self-indulgence. Sadly, cultural conditioning being what it is, the immoral excesses of affluent societies are not seen as such by those who are conditioned within them.

To break out of the mental framework which sustains this blinkered perception, requires a willingness to see through the eyes of someone from a very different culture.

Empathise then, with one of the millions of children who die each year from malnutrition. Imagine you are one of them - if you can.

Flies crawl about your mouth and eyes, as they have done since you were born. Soon they will reclaim and recycle your skin and bone to the spent earth. Your mother's breasts hang empty against her ribs. Dry nipples yield no comfort to your suckling urge.

Before your struggling heart finally expires and brings the blessing of death, gaze for a while upon another place and wonder at what might have been.

Let the pain and privation of your short life direct those large staring eyes to seek out images of Britain, just a few jet-hours away over the horizon.

When your initial panic and confusion subsides, what do you see? Too much to take in? Then focus on one person - that well-dressed lady walking away from her parked car. She drops 20 pence into your proxy Oxfam begging bowl, before entering an air-conditioned palace of lights and luxury in order to spend £30 on perfume to dab behind her ears. She wanders over to the ladies' fashion department and resolves to discard

her year-old, worn-three-times, 2-piece suit and replace it with something more trendy for the Spring - a snip at £150. Last year's pink is out, soft pastel olive green is in for this year. She can't be expected to go around in clothes that are clean, functional, hardly-worn and tidy, but, well, last year's model. Such deprivation would make her so unhappy, poor thing.

Next, like millions of others, she pops in for one of her regular sessions with the hairdresser. It is just an "inzy-winzy bit expensive and indulgent", but she can afford it and besides, her new suit must be complemented with the right accessories and hairdo. One would be pointless without the other. On the way out, she pays the £25 bill with her credit card and passes a £2 tip to Toni her personal pamperer. (I'm told by ladies that these amounts are seriously under-estimated).

Outside she spots a different begging bowl, this time for 'Save the Children', but she's done the charity thing already today, so her conscience is comfortable about diverting her eyes and hurrying past. Her £4.00 parking charge seems extortionate but justified because it has been a productive morning and she is feeling good about herself. Next stop, the out-of-town supermarket to stock up for the coming week.

The huge size of the shopping trolley should have warned you, but you are not prepared for the shock of seeing so much food being loaded into it and the sheer quantity and variety on display are beyond your comprehension and too much to bear.

Something tears at your emotions. It is not that the very stuff of life is there in abundance. The pain of such torture is entirely understandable. Rather it is the obscenity of excess, of the celebration and promotion of indulgence, of people who are so rich that they casually pick and choose without conscience, on the basis of personal gratification rather than need. Observe your target!

Honey Pops for the children. - ("They won't eat anything else!"). A bulk pack of crispy-bacon flavoured crisps. - ("All the kids have them Mum!"). Three packets of chocolate caramel bars. - (The ones doing the Cyberman promotion!). Some sherry, wine, a variety of cheeses, vol-au-vents, assorted biscuits, chocolate mints. - (Harold and Brenda are coming round for a meal!). In no time the trolley is full of all sorts of exotic fare - exotic to you that is. To your target, these are routine, taken-for-granted purchases. But she hasn't finished yet.

Follow her into the pet food section. Note the 6 tins of dog food and the carefully-chosen cat food. - ("Tiddles prefers the tuna, rabbit and duck flavours")... Wonder at the affluence of people who not only have housing, cars, food and clothing, but can also find hundreds of pounds each year to buy and maintain cats and dogs. And this despite the fact

that these animals are anti-social, polluting, a health hazard and inappropriate in urban areas. The immorality of restricting the natural requirements of all sorts of pets is also conveniently overlooked.

Wonder again at the vast pet industry, which exploits, breeds and genetically manipulates animals for profit. Compare with your situation the prolific quantity and variety of pet foods and the sheer scale of human enterprise devoted to feeding and pampering pets in affluent societies. Wonder at the way that intelligent people rationalise their contribution to this immoral multi-million pound enterprise - and yet pass by your begging bowl.

At the checkout, you would prefer to shut your eyes to the sight of so many trolleys so easily laden with unimaginable treasure, but your attention is drawn to the control being exercised by a healthy, well-dressed child of your age, whose tantrum-strategy elicits the desired effect - an instant placating sweetie bar and other goodies promised "for being a good boy" later.

Enough! Let us leave these few anecdotal images and widen the scope of your detached perspective.

Consider the well-healed people at prayer, thanking their god for their bountiful harvest and the sun and the rain which ensure the fertility and beauty of their land - the same sun that scorches your earth and the same rain that misses it. They must be such worthy people to be so chosen. Consider the school children being told that God made and loves each one of them. They do not have flies crawling on them or swollen bellies, so such cosy indoctrination is readily assimilated as they experience a warm glow of certainty that God exists and is rooted in their culture.

But what they and adults receive as truth is uncritically constructed to be convenient and relative to the cultural norms of a British clientele. They fail to recognise the inappropriateness of their received Christian rhetoric and principles to the reality of your starving, diseased circumstance, and ignore or suppress the logical concomitant of such dogma - namely that inequity and suffering throughout the world must also be God-given.

This, together with the fact that religions also play the capitalist game, acquiring land, property and wealth in their own self-interest, means that religions thus help to sustain the cultural status quo.

Consider also the fertile earth of this green and pleasant land and weep at how its lush bounty is relentlessly buried under concrete, polluted and damaged. The perpetrators, the architects of affluence, not only destroy their own inheritance but also rape and reap the resources of foreign lands. They have not squatted under a burning sun in the dust of

a spent land. Their culture does not teach them that the natural world is the bosom of all life. It is to the human race what your mother's breasts are, or should be, to you.

Consider the sad fact that most people in Britain are so affluent that they have and commit significant amounts of disposable wealth to non-essential, often futile, even harmful consumption and behaviour. Even the alleged poor of Britain, as you have seen, own pets, smoke tobacco, drink alcohol, own televisions and videos and gamble - the list is huge.

Consider the extravagance and massive scale of human effort and money which drive the production, marketing and consumption of these non-essentials, as well as the disgraceful waste of energy, the environmental consequences, and the immoral use of planned obsolescence and maintenance-complexity, which are built into so many products.

Consider the obscenity of how fraternal divisions within the human family result in vast wealth, creativity and effort being directed by affluent societies into producing ever more sophisticated weapons of war, but not directed to meeting your simple basic needs.

Consider famous sportspersons, whose useless skills (e.g. hitting a ball into a hole or over a net) bring them riches beyond your wildest dreams, and adulation as charismatic models of success and achievement, even having honours, titles and medals bestowed on them - and yet their efforts contribute nothing to the cause of human progress.

Consider the terrible environmental and social cost which must result from the huge and ever-growing, global human population, trying to emulate the same level of gluttony.

You could go on, but you have seen enough. Affluent societies are engaged in a rampant binge of self-indulgence and profligacy. "Blow you Jack. I'm alright", sums up the underlying philosophy of the affluent society. It is promoted by those in control of the socio-economic milieu, and sustained by the people who are products of that culture and part of it. Their cultural conditioning renders normal that which, when viewed from your detached perspective, can be seen as immoral.

**Return now to your barren reality and ponder the lottery of life in this wonderful (God-given?) world. You have seen the winners. You did not choose to be a loser but you are. You drew the short straw. Hard luck!**

**Don't expect your affluent cousins to save you. They and their governments might occasionally recognise your plight but they are too**

**busy feathering their own nests for their response to be anything but token.**

# Capitalism - The Human Race

Politicians around the world focus their priority actions and arguments with blinkered perception upon the sacred cows of free-market competition and economic expansion. They see them as self-evident prerequisites for a thriving, viable society, and they see ever-growing production and consumption as taken-for-granted virtues.

The privileged beneficiaries of business define and control the planning philosophies of governments at local, national and international levels. Their convincing rationales are based on their own criteria, which fail to take account of the full social and/or environmental costs of their activities. (Child slave labour in the Indian sub-continent and irreversible rainforest clearance, for example, have been justified and tolerated by governments and local business leaders for "sound" economic reasons.) The definitions and concepts of these sacred cows predicate political/economic commentary in the media, and are thus taken into the folk lore of democracies. In Britain for example, where the need for less building on green-field sites and for fewer cars is urgent, increasing sales of both are celebrated and taken for granted as essential indicators of a buoyant, thriving economy, and successful political action

The pursuit of economic competition and growth amounts to a dogmatic belief system, the concepts and values of which set the perceptual framework, into which the minds of rising generations are conditioned, and which constrain the way they come to plan, control and think about human activity and organisation. Alternative values and concepts which do not fit into this established perceptual framework are consequently dismissed as naive or heretical. And so the belief system itself is reinforced in a self-sustaining continuous process.

It is a process in which (in Britain for example), economic urgency drives the relentless growth of vast urban conurbations, as villages and towns sacrifice their tranquillity and quality of life by expanding into adjacent countryside with concrete, asphalt, housing, factories and all the attendant infra-structure of economic development. In America, cities proudly claim to be "the fastest - growing in the west", or wherever.

The mythology of this sacred growth process is that it is beneficial to the people on whom it is imposed - it will bring jobs and prosperity, and presumably a better life to the community. If this were the case then places like London, New York, Rio de Janeiro, Mexico City must be utopias. In fact, such places are racked with poverty, crime, inequity, dereliction, pollution and poor quality of life for many people. And what

are the more-affluent beneficiaries of the process doing? They make sure that they live in the leafy suburbs, or countryside or smaller provincial towns and villages, where the tentacles of 'development' have yet to reach.

Economic expansion also demands ever-growing production and consumption of vast amounts of energy. Since most useful energy is derived from finite fossil sources and causes serious local/global pollution, its use should be minimised and the sources conserved. Also, history has shown that reliance on nuclear energy is fraught with risk of sudden and long-term harmful consequences. Unfortunately, not only is energy central to the economic process but it is even marketed as a profit-making commodity. Private companies actually exist and compete to promote greater (dirty, dangerous, finite) energy consumption to bring profits to their shareholders. As I write, the more household energy I consume, the cheaper the unit price becomes.

The clean, safe energy derived from waves, tides, wind and sun are there for the taking, in perpetuity. But national populations continue to grow on the back of unsustainable energy sources, and profits shape energy policy, more than holistic global or national need. Governments depend upon the revenue from such energy consumption and shareholders and managers enjoy fat rewards for running a successful (i.e. profitable) business, in which the social and environmental costs are removed from the balance sheet and passed on to others.

Inevitably and rightly, raw materials are wrought from the environment, modified, sold, consumed. Their careful management and conservation are crucial to the future of the planet, and yet economic ethics turn a blind eye to blatant, widespread commercial strategies which damage ecologies and which cunningly build waste and obsolescence into products.

Economic ethics also obscenely promote production and profligate consumption of non-essentials by economic winners, whilst millions of other people, without economic clout, are denied the basic essentials of life itself.

They are also responsible for subjecting people to the lottery of employment. Quality of life for most people depends on work-related income. For those who lose out in the cut and thrust of industrial and commercial competition, redundancy brings hardship. For many millions of people, hardship is a life-long experience. Others have a bite at the cherry and are then cast aside to watch the economic band wagon roll on without them.

International companies, seemingly without allegiance or accountability to any particular state, move their production and finance

around the world, exercising their power and freedom to exploit low-cost labour and other opportunities in their own self-interest, often in ways which adversely affect national and regional economic / social stability. In Britain, for example, the consequence has been the upheaval of communities as our great industries and manufacturing tradition have declined.

Whilst poverty-stricken nations struggle (and often fail) to achieve economic expansion, successful nations, already wallowing in a surfeit of affluence, compulsively seek to expand their economies still further ahead of the pack. There is something wrong with an economic system which must perpetually expand. Britain, as I write in the first decade of the 21st century, is encouraging hundreds of thousands of immigrants into the country. The sole justification given is that they are essential to our economy. And so the population pressures on our over-crowded island habitat continue to grow.

The process of economic growth and competition, then, is a treadmill with a momentum of its own, which requires participants to keep moving, expanding and changing in order to avoid a tumble. In doing so, they also keep the system going, and so it becomes the established reality into which all human enterprise is locked. Even ostensibly unrelated enterprises like the arts and sport seem unable to avoid getting caught up in it.

Profit-driven businesses are the major players in this competitive struggle to survive and succeed. For them to be in front, others must be behind. In competition, there must always be losers. Staying ahead of the field, that is maximising profits and out-performing your opponents, requires the exploitation and manipulation of resources, i.e. land, energy, materials, equipment, buildings, money, knowledge etc. - and people.

Resources are part of the <u>means</u> by which so-called 'progress' and 'success' are achieved. If their manipulation involves ruthlessness, profligacy, immediate or deferred social costs, environmental trade-off, then so be it. These outcomes are incidental to the main purpose of playing the treadmill game.

Those who advocate environmental conservation, the management of resources and the happiness and equitable prosperity of <u>all</u> people as the <u>purpose</u> of human enterprise, are largely ignored or seen as unqualified, fringe voyeurs, who don't understand the sacred necessity of unfettered economic growth and competition in the 'real' world.

At best, with the prevailing conceptual framework by which economic progress is measured stacked against them, voyeurs like the green lobby are seen as little more than well-intentioned watchdogs and

whistle-blowers on selected targets (Shell this month, Barclays bank next.) - a restraining influence on the excesses of competing vested interests, rather than offering a realistic alternative and workable system.

Meanwhile, out in the 'real' world, who is challenging or trying to redefine the established conceptual framework which asserts that world-wide economic competition is healthy and necessary? Who is exposing the delusion that there is room at the front for everyone? Who is pointing out that the dynamics of the unstable and changing variables, which are the essence of economic competition, ensure, by definition, an unstable world in which individuals, communities, companies and nations not only win but lose, not only rise but fall, not only prosper but suffer?

Not the winning teams! For them, the system is clearly working and they have the most to lose should it falter. They have control and a vested interest in keeping it going, whilst the also-rans have little choice but to play the game too, in their struggle to make it work for them.'

**As the developing countries aspire to achieve parity and world population continues to rise, billions of people are scrambling to get on the treadmill. For them <u>all</u> to achieve their dream of perpetual material wealth, then world production and consumption must expand to an impossibly massive scale - and lead to an even more damaged, depleted and polluted world.**

**Hence the compulsive pursuit of this costly and damaging human race is set to continue unless and until the rules, ethics and success criteria of the economic game are radically changed."**

# Life After Death
# The Disingenuous Purveyance of Certainty

Death is a subject about which logical thought and discussion are difficult. Culturally-conditioned taboos, attitudes, needs and beliefs get in the way. Religious belief-adherence in particular serves to resist and suppress open-ended inquiry, in that a prescribed post-death mythology is accepted by believers as fact and therefore unequivocal.

On the other hand, one cannot think about death without also considering what follows it, and so the possibility of immortality and (say) a Christian heaven cannot be ignored. Too many people have constrained their lives, or given their lives, or indeed have taken the lives of others in order to gain access to it, for it to be treated as inconsequential.

Either there is a heaven and 'souls' go there, or heaven does not exist. But there is no earthly, tangible evidence for its existence or of its nature. The human mind cannot know these things as it might know of the moon or the word-processor that made these words. All it can do is blindly believe in its existence and construct a fantasy of its nature.

Any prevailing heaven-view is nurtured by religious indoctrination and utterances from all manner of individuals and groups, who claim or assume divinely appointed insight. It is therefore a concept which is variable according to religious sectarian diversity. It is also variable and modified in the course of time, not by divine revelation but by the adjustment of various prescribed doctrines of the day, by religious executives, in response to secular enlightenment and attitudes. (By way of example, as I write, without bolts of lightning or voices from heaven, the Pope is at last getting the idea that the use of condoms might be permitted in the fight against Aids. And the Church of England is moving towards allowing the ordination of women bishops.)

One can only assume that previous generations were meekly unthinking in their acceptance of the visual images of heaven, which were marketed as reality in the past. Gambolling with the angels and wild beasts-turned-passive, in a tropical paradise, bathed in eternal sunshine (Not too hot!), is a counter-productive scenario to would-be intelligent believers in today's world. Nowadays, such visual images are avoided and replaced by rhetorical, feel-good impressions like the promise of "eternal salvation", being "with God" and "reunited with loved ones". As in the past, the wishful thinking of believers means that such meaningless prescription is embraced and not challenged. The Roman Catholic

concept of "Limbo" is also being quietly down-played and buried. As far as I know there has not been any divine revelation and God hasn't told the Pope what to replace it with.

However, for non-believers, who must approach the concept from a detached, unindoctrinated position, the Christian heaven assertion must stand up to open-ended scrutiny, if only because it must compete with other different religious and non-religious post-death scenarios, which also claim to offer the truth.

Soliloquy is a useful contribution to scrutiny, so let me share my thoughts with you.

When someone dies, the body (including the brain) ceases to function and disappears if left to natural decomposition. The person's mind must also cease. They sense nothing, cannot experience pain, see, hear, smell, etc., and cannot communicate by talking, listening, reading etc., certainly not in any earthly sense since these attributes require a body and a brain.

If their soul (whatever that means) lives on after physical and mental death, in heaven (whatever that means), do they still retain these attributes? If so, are the attributes identical to those of the former living, earthly person? For example, would the soul of a former 6-month foetus be different from the soul of the same person if he/she lived to 90 years of age?

Do souls see as if with eyes? And what are they seeing? What and how one sees depends upon many things, not least the interpretation of visual signals in the light of previous experience. Does earthly experience or memory carry over into the alleged after-life and affect one's perception?

Belief in heaven must be predicated on an assumption that sensory interpretation, perception and all the attributes that made us unique personalities on earth, still apply, not least because those who go there are promised that they will meet their maker and be with their loved ones. 'Being with' and 'meeting' are human physical phenomena implying seeing, recognising, interaction and language. Their 'loved ones' must be perceptions of earthly physical and personality characteristics.

One must wonder if the aborted foetus soul takes on its earthly physical form in paradise, outside of its still-living mother's womb. Perhaps the foetus soul is held in some sort of limbo until the earth mother dies of old age, senility and arthritis. In which case, are the two incompatible physical/mental forms reincarnated in heaven, to meet again and renew the old bond?

Perhaps the mother's soul manifests itself in its former young-mother form. If so, does the ageing process apply in heaven? Will the

foetus soul develop? Will the young-mother soul experience labour? Will they both develop their bonding through dependency, suckling, comforting etc? Meanwhile, how will the young mother's soul relate to the three husbands she had while on earth, the last of whom she knew and loved only as an elderly person? Indeed, can the bond between any souls pick up and re-establish the various and incompatible earthly bonds that were broken by death?

If the believer somehow believes that earthly bonds are replicated in heaven, then they must also believe that danger, pain and unhappiness must also exist there, because without these things, there can be no need for the succour, comfort and dependence, which are implicit in the mother-child relationship. They must also believe that souls age. If they do then death is a part of heavenly experience. If they don't then babies stay as babies for ever - or the mother-child love-bond is not replicated in heaven.

Similarly, do souls feel happiness, indifference or sadness if their earthly loved-one is denied access to heaven? If the first two emotions apply, then their earthly love-bond has been expunged from their memory or heaven is filled with souls without the capacity for empathy, sympathy, compassion etc. If they experience sadness, then this means that souls have earthly divergence of emotion and heavenly life is not always a happy experience. Either way, the concept of heaven as perpetual bliss is flawed.

It is difficult to assume other than that the heavenly souls of humans must interact if they are to fulfil the promise of renewing their earthly love-bonds. Interaction means communicating. Communicating means that they have something to communicate. That 'something' must therefore extend the awareness and knowledge of the recipient. The recipient must therefore have the means of receiving, analysing, comparing, storing and using the acquired information, that is of learning and changing. Souls must therefore evolve as individuals, within a socially-dynamic and ever-changing society. But if heaven is perfection, it cannot be improved, and if it can always be improved then it must have perpetual imperfection built into it.

There are two other possibilities :- (i) Souls do 'not" interact or communicate. Hence they must remain isolated from each other, devoid of the means to be cognizant or express anything or be happy.

(ii) Souls do interact but only at an instinctive level, like insects. No doubt all bees are not unhappy responding to their biological computer programming.

Both possibilities hardly amount to desirable, eternal salvation in paradise.

Despite all this, the denial of access to heaven is still very much the coercion used by Christians to convert and ensure compliance amongst believers. The concept of divine judgment, either at the time of earthly death or at some time in the future, when <u>all</u> the quick and the dead will be allocated to their permanent states of happiness or torment (both earthly human attributes), is still purveyed as unequivocal truth. Being 'good' is not sufficient. Belief in Christian dogma is essential if one is to pass the test. ("No-one comes to the Father but by me")

Inevitably the process is one in which the vast majority of the human race (i.e. non-believers in Jesus Christ) have been, throughout the Christian era, rejected and subjected to promises of no mercy, no forgiveness and condemnation to unspeakable horrors. Horrors are of course the necessary concomitant of heaven. The fire and brimstone scenario of hell has been effectively portrayed in past works of religious art and roared from the pulpits of churches and chapels across the world.

Nowadays the notion of heaven is marketed in warm, comforting rhetoric rather than descriptive terms. Without it, the Christian church is nothing. Also, in Britain at least, the notion of hell is not so openly invoked, not least because it raises awkward questions about the morality of the Christian god and is therefore an embarrassment and is counter-productive in the battle for the minds of a thinking, society. Such shifts in institutional policy (There are many others) are not divinely revealed but are simply pragmatic strategies for ensuring the survival of the institution.

One Christian sect, the Church of England, faced with this embarrassment and a serious decline in membership, has recently repackaged the heaven-hell concept. Now, we are told, hell is real enough but should be seen as simply a state of non-existence. Even the late Pope Jean Paul ll recently began to redefine heaven and hell, without so much as a whiff of divine revelation in support. The logical deduction, that former (and some present) religious leaders, purveying the heavenly paradise / hell-torment dogma, must have been peddling untruths, is not admitted.

I could go on and on, but I think I have written sufficient to make the point that the death-related dogmas, which are fundamental to Christian and other religious marketing strategies, are but diverse, arbitrary theories (i.e. human fantasies) which rely heavily on unquestioning gullibility for their hold on committed believers and potential converts.

I have been writing about death in the context of mainly Christian claims. If one opens it out to include the full diversity of religious post-death claims, both past and present, ( for example reincarnation, or the vestal virgin reward for Islamic martyrs), then deducing a plausible 'truth' from the morass of conflicting fantasy becomes even more impossible.

The only reliable conclusion that can be drawn from a detached search for truth is that we can no more prove the existence of heaven, hell, reincarnation or gods than the existence of invisible little people living under the floorboards.

We are still left with uncertainty because, as with all fantastic assertions, we cannot with certainty prove their non-existence either.

For the free thinker, there is little point in worrying or attaching mystical significance to that which cannot be known.

For some, religious belief offers certainty and a means of handling the mystery and perhaps sadness of death in a way which reinforces their religious perceptual framework. It immunizes the believer against logic and sustains a closed mind in which the prescribed fantasy is reassuringly seen as fact.

But for many others, religious influence on social attitudes ensures that what should be the most natural, accepted experience in the world - their own death - is surrounded by darkness, trauma and fear.

Around the world there are thousands of different supernatural belief fraternities, which rely on the blind faith of their followers in a vast assortment of disingenuous dogmas. I could have drawn attention to the nonsense of omnipresent, omniscient gods who demand worship and obedience whilst dishing out suffering on a massive scale. I could have compared the competing definitions and characteristics of the vast array of gods, saints, demons, spirits and shamans that are claimed to exist. I could have trawled through history - 9/11, Wako, Salem, inquisitions, crusades, burning of heretics and witches, class and caste discrimination, genocide, fundamentalist societies, interfaith conflict, terrorism, etc. - and exposed the dogmas that give rise to such ugly manifestations of religious zealotry. But I chose to draw attention to one dogma - i.e. the Christian assertion of heavenly life after death. My intention has been :-

(i) to show that religious dogmas are arbitrary human constructs, not divine revelation. They can be tenacious but are subject to change if the institution itself has to adjust to changing secular circumstances in order to survive;

(ii) to highlight the fact that it is the presentation and manipulation of dogmas that condition, coerce and bribe believers and enable religions to hold sway over their minds;

(iii) to encourage the reader to challenge the world's religions, and especially their own, to address the disparity between them, in an ecumenical search for truth. They cannot all be purveying the truth, since their dogmas are malleable over time and different from each other, even mutually blasphemous;

(iv) to encourage the reader to challenge individual religions to at least purge themselves of internal discrimination, prejudice and oppression. (For example, the tenacious mal-treatment of women as a result of Islam in many parts of the world.);

(v) simply to sow the seeds of healthy scepticism towards the propensity of humans to construct thousands upon thousands of religions, sects and cults, all with their own alleged exclusive supernatural accreditation;

**(vi) to thereby help to bring about a world in which children have a right to grow up with open minds, uncontaminated by superstition, sectarian bigotry or prejudice, so that they may, in time, come to their own conclusions and decide for themselves which dogmas, if any, they wish to believe.**

# Islam - a Case for Phobia

Islamophobia is typically defined as being an irrational fear or hatred of Moslems, and is often claimed to be widespread in British society. But I use the word "Islamophobia" here to refer to feelings of apprehension (foreboding even) with regard to the <u>religion</u> Islam, <u>not</u> to the individual believer.

I believe that individuals should be judged, (as Martin Luther King Jr. said), by the content of their character - not by their race, colour or creed. I am a defacto atheist, but I count among my friends and family believers in Christianity. Whilst, for various reasons, I find the historical and some of the present manifestations of their religion nonsensical and not to my liking, I nevertheless have no problem with respecting them, associating with them and even loving them as fellow human beings.

The same applies to people of other faiths. It goes without saying that there are plenty of Moslems, Mormons, Buddhists, Hindus, Jews, Christians, etc. who are decent people. They and their religious beliefs, in so far as they are private, personal and benign to the rest of society, are deserving of respect. But where I find fault with their religion, and the consequences of their belief, I should be free to say so.

I once asked a secondary school religious education teacher if she taught her pupils about not just the good, but also the bad and the ugly manifestations of religion. She was taken aback and challenged me to give her an example of the bad or the ugly.

I suggested that the oppression and maltreatment of women within the Moslem world was just one such example.

She countered that the Koran upholds the status and rights of women. It followed that any maltreatment of women by Moslems would be un-Islamic and therefore not apposite to the teaching of Islam to her pupils.

I have heard this "un-Islamic" argument in relation to terrorism, the treatment of apostates and other Islamic crimes, with the oft-repeated assertion that Islam is a "peaceful" religion.

I have not been indoctrinated from childhood with the alleged words of Allah or Mohammed, but I have read the Koran and found it very depressing. The notions of hate, separateness, violence, fatalism and a vindictive ruthless god are recurring themes within it.

There <u>are</u> references to the rights of women, some of which are considerate, but they are hardly an antidote to the power and dominance accorded to men. For a start, **the Koran is addressed to <u>men</u>, and <u>men</u>**

**control Islam.** By divine appointment, men are well-placed to assume a higher status and control over women. Some instructions in the Koran make it quite clear, as in this quote :-

"Men have authority over women because God has made the one superior over the other, and because they spend their wealth to maintain them. Good women are obedient. They guard their unseen parts because God has guarded them. As for those from whom you fear disobedience, admonish them, forsake them in beds apart, and beat them. Then if they obey you, take no further action against them. Surely God is high, supreme."

But the Koran is not the only repository of Islamic instruction. When I read the dictats of Shariah and the Hadiths as well, then my phobia deepens.

Having said all this, it must be recognised that these texts are NOT the religion, any more than the Bible, the Book of Mormon, et al. are. They are simply inanimate objects with words printed on paper. They have no meaning unless and until someone reads, decodes and interprets the contents. **Any religion exists and is manifest only in the beliefs and behaviour of people who choose to attach supernatural and superstitious significance to particular interpretations of the texts and to lead their lives accordingly.**

Given this, it has to be said that Islam is NOT (only) a peaceful religion. It has many faces, some of which are benign, peaceful, caring, civilised. But others are violent, bigoted, sexist, oppressive, totalitarian.

When a suicide bomber invokes Allah and seeks martyrdom and a place in paradise, by killing himself and others, it cannot be said that this has nothing to do with Islam.

When the likes of the Taliban and its thought police impose an oppressive, closed regime on Afghan and other societies, and deny education to girls, it cannot be said that this is not a manifestation of Islam.

When a woman has acid thrown in her face for not wearing a veil or for being a Christian; or is denied the opportunity to participate in (say) athletics; or cannot marry outside of her religion; or is raped and then regarded as soiled and culpable and to be ostracized, while her attacker(s) go free; or spends all her days housebound, fulfilling a hidden male-dominated subservient role; or, as a child, is subjected to genital mutilation; or is forced into marriage; or --- etc. , it must be faced that all these things and more happen in Islamic societies around the world.

When I think of the baying for bloody retribution and death for apostates, critics, writers, cartoonists and satirists who dare to think for

themselves and to express their challenging thoughts openly, while others are muzzled by fear;

---- and when I think of the amputations, beheadings and stoning to death that still happen in certain Muslim countries;

----- and when I think of the fact that some British Moslems express a solidarity with all other Moslems across the world, over and above their loyalty and commitment to their non-Moslem fellow citizens;

----- and when I think of the anti-western, (anti-me) hateful rhetoric that comes out of the mouths of influential Imams and Mullahs, and their recruitment of terrorists;

--- and when I think of the openly - stated aim of fundamentalist Moslems to establish an Islamic state here, there and everywhere, including Britain;

---- and when I see the children of Moslems in separate schools being indoctrinated into the nonsense of Islam and segregation from the infidel children;

--- and when I notice that dissenting, apologetic, moderate Moslem voices are conspicuous by their absence, or timid, or seek to blame non-Moslems, or invoke the "Islam is peaceful" mantra, or are unwilling to risk the consequences of speaking out and trying to purge their religion of its faults.

----- When I think of all these things, I have a foreboding of a potential for the rise of Islamic fascism, cultural civil conflict, and/or a descent into closed cultures in which enlightenment, freedom and integration are suffocated by dogma and fear.

I argue elsewhere in this book for an integrated Britain, with a shared moral national identity. If this is to happen for our children, then it has to be recognised that Islam, (along with other religions) can be (is) a devisive impediment.

**It behoves us all to reach out to each other in fellowship, whilst at the same time being honest and rigorous in exposing those aspects of belief and practice that militate against it**.

Ideally this should come from within the Moslem religion itself, but until that happens, we should recognise that phobia regarding the religion of Islam is entirely reasonable and we should all exercise our right, in our free society, to speak out for the common good, ie. for Moslems and non-Moslems alike.

# Liberty, Equality, Fraternity
# The Three Delusions of Democracy

How nobly do the ideals of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity tug at the conscience and emotions. And so they should. The vision of a fraternal human family, in which equity and individual freedom thrive, is certainly a noble aspiration. Such ideals have inspired the overthrow of many cruel, oppressive regimes, under which people have suffered.

Unfortunately, the right to pursue and exercise liberty and fraternity, which is seminal to popular democratic philosophies, paradoxically also ensures that democracies are unstable, inequitable and divided.

This is because liberty and fraternity are invoked as sacred, absolute rights by different people, to justify different actions, at different times, in different circumstances, for different purposes. Freedom to indulge personal choice, freedom of expression, freedom to associate and to organise and promote conflicting religious, economic, political (even anti-democratic) objectives, are taken as their democratic right by individuals and groups, and adapted to suit their particular moral frameworks. Anyone (including democratically-elected governments) who seeks to limit these perceived rights, is easily derided as anti-democratic or as denying basic freedoms.

Given the inevitable moral free-for-all, it is little wonder that the exercise of assumed rights by one group often denies or adversely affects the rights of others. In that the rights of some groups prevail at the expense of others, inequalities and conflicts can and do occur in democracies.

Those rights which prevail in law and taken-for-granted majority practice, are often rooted in historical precedence and tradition. Where the self-interests of individuals and groups are met by such established rights, they will seek to preserve the status quo.

. For example, those who stand to profit from taken-for-granted entrepreneurial freedom, exercise their established right to compete, exploit and contrive to make themselves economically-advantaged. One consequence is the most obvious of inequalities - the persistent, destabilising affluence-poverty differential. They also exploit their freedom to participate as major protagonists in the political process at local and national levels of government, in order to safeguard their interests, and underwrite and expand the economic system from which they derive their wealth. They are notoriously prone to paying lip-service

to the environment, equity and a caring society, whilst continuing to legislate offerings to Mammon.

Another example is that of religious groups whose rights to organise, recruit, acquire tax - advantaged wealth, exercise power in politics and education, indoctrinate children and exercise media bias, are assumed and supported in law. One consequence is that the moral rights of children to be free from religious indoctrination, and to receive an open, humanist education are met with tenacious non-acknowledgement. Another is that religious discrimination, conflict and social division are endemic cancers in many societies.

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Another way in which liberty is exercised is in the assumed virtue of free expression and the right to organise and associate in political fraternities.

In democracies, freedom of expression is rightly considered essential to open, accountable government, an informed electorate and an effective society. An open dialectic between differing political viewpoints is taken-for-granted. Unfortunately (in Britain for example) the degree of openness is severely constrained by the effects of narrow political argument, the party system of government and by dubious ways in which the dialectic is carried on in the popular media.

Political parties, which often have their origins in social/economic class division, perpetuate their separate adversarial existences by maintaining powerful institutional structures with widespread propaganda and activist networks. Once established, they are obliged by definition to devise and claim as their own, different, conflicting, vested perceptions of the varied and complex issues before them. They package together, under one party label, policies on such diverse issues as education, defence, agriculture, tax, the economy, civil rights, health, welfare, employment, foreign policy, etc.

Access to political power is most likely to be achieved by joining a major political party, and party membership brings pressure for loyalty to party ideology and its policy package. A member's conscience and reason may tell him to oppose his own party and support another on certain issues, but the "If you're not with us, you're against us" fraternity syndrome makes such dissent very difficult.

As with so many institutions, the political power, unity and survival of the party tend to influence, if not dictate, party policy, argument and action. They also constrain debate and criticism, inhibit open creative thought and ensure that allegiance to the party is seen as an over-riding duty, rather than allowing the individual the freedom to form

variable allegiences with like-minded others in response to different issues.

The power of the established major political party machines to control access to the political process, to define the political agenda and the perceptual framework in which the agenda is addressed, means that those who would change or challenge the system itself, or exercise open independent reason, free from the party strait jacket, are less likely to participate in real political power - because to do so, they must play the party game.

There is another counter-productive aspect to the party system of government, at least in Britain. Driven by their fraternal preoccupation with separate party identity and with holding on to, or gaining power, party members devote a lot of time and effort to undermining opponents' credibility and public image. Far from cooperating in their important legislative task, they snipe, ridicule, block and attack their opponents as a matter of principle, often in a disgraceful display of infantile point-scoring.

They are assisted in this colossal waste of opportunity by the popular media. Under their own claim to freedom of expression, by tenacious, predatory journalism and not a little biased manipulation of truth/untruth, the popular media define and shape inter and intra-party problems and conflicts into issues of consuming public significance. In so doing, they promote discord and inefficiency in the legislative process and fail to make objectivity and open, cooperative endeavour the main focus of public and parliamentary concern.

It is a sobering paradox that whilst the party system tends to deny free-thinkers access to political power, democratic freedom allows anti-democratic fraternities to exist, organise, evangelize and even participate in the democratic political process itself. The consequences can be de-stabilising when they lead to civil unrest, social division or criminal or anti-social activity.

The consequences can also be horrendous, particularly when the vested interests of religious, racial or national prejudices combine in holy, sometimes violent, coercive alliances, with their own political front organisations and the freedom to disseminate their own sophisticated racist/sectarian propaganda.

Protestant-unionism and Catholic-republicanism have sustained violence and fuelled suffering and discord in Northern Ireland for generations. The blowing apart of little children and the extortion, torture and murder of others by such fraternities are still rationalised as but regrettable incidents in the "legitimate armed struggle". (Fraternities have

their own language, terminology and rationales, which conveniently render their activities as morally just.)

The I.R.A.'s political front, Sinn Fein, has not been held accountable for its culpability in I.R.A. bestiality. Its leaders (aided by an obsequious press) have been accorded the legitimacy and respectability of peace-loving, democratic politicians, by the votes of Roman Catholic citizens. Indeed, they have been feted and financed, not only by Irish Catholics, but also by a powerful Roman Catholic Irish-American fraternity, whose culpability has also gone unchallenged. Partisan fraternity is self-interested and blind to wider perspectives.

The political ascendancy of Muslim fundamentalist tyranny in various countries is another example of how anti-democratic fraternities can exercise their democratic right to exist and achieve power. Using the ballot box, where it suits their purposes, and also using their freedom to organise and employ sophisticated propaganda techniques as well as some rather nasty incitement, coercion and extortion, such groups impose their own sectarian ideologies and policies on local/national populations and thereby limit the rights and freedoms of others.

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Freedom of expression has other ramifications. "Expression" is the act of creating, writing, performing or speaking. It usually involves an audience which watches, reads or listens. Freedom to do all these things, without restraint, is held to be an absolute 'good' and a definitive hallmark of a civilised, open, free society. By contributing to and sampling the fruits of a free market in expressions, people will (so the argument goes) acquire and show discernment, abandon prejudice and exercise sound judgment and make better choices in their behaviour. The forces of evil will not find fertile ground in which to grow.

To deny such freedom is regarded as a slippery slope to inevitable total suppression and control - which are hallmarks of oppressive, totalitarian political/religious regimes. Fear of one begets the other.

But the interaction of expressions with their audience and their social context leads to a cause-and-effect cascade of outcomes, which are bound to be either good, bad or indifferent, when viewed from different perspectives.

Those who control the popular media in democracies would claim to be a force for good in society, exposing unethical/unjust behaviour, defining and promoting what are to be major public concerns and shaping public morality and rationality in beneficial ways. They would be reluctant to admit that they also shape morality, rationality or behaviour in harmful ways, or that their selection, definition and

promotion of issues are influenced by commercial and biased self-interest.

It is surely naive to claim and irresponsible to assume that unfettered freedom is a "good" thing, but that is the justification and the underlying ethic, which has made inevitable the anarchic explosion of competing media expressions in recent decades, in free societies.

There are strong vested or intellectual bodies of opinion which resist attempts to work back from the many ills of this world to the causative influence of expressions, and which invoke the sacred right to free expression, in order to quell the voices of caution. In their language, 'censorship' is a dirty word.

Intellectual opinion might recognise the need for token controls, like the British 9 o-clock television watershed, in order to protect the immature, but at the same time insist that censorship is best exercised by the individual. They fail to recognise that the immature <u>are</u> individuals, and since most media are accessible to the immature, then most media would need to be censored accordingly.

An example of 'vested" opinion which opposes censorship, can be found in the television industry, where those who create and control programme content and timing seem to measure their professional virility by the extent to which they can push the limits of their creative licence, not least in the expression of sex, violence and criminal behaviour. Given the pervasive influence of television on the minds of all ages and types of people, it is inevitable that content which is beneficial, or at least harmless to certain audiences, is also received by audiences for whom it is inappropriate or harmful, or will encourage personal/social behaviour with harmful consequences.

Any primary school teacher in Britain will confirm that young children watch a lot of television. Many of them have their own TV in their bedrooms and frequently watch so-called "adult" programmes. The viewing of video films and explicit news-coverage, is commonplace. Many parents feel helpless and appalled that even overtly innocent programmes like comedy and soap operas, which are habitually watched by children, and teenage fiction and magazines, often contain material, which they would not wish their children to see or hear. Much of it raises areas of human experience, which are inappropriate to young minds and which might best be left to later years.

In Britain there has also been a depressing trend in many children's TV programmes, towards a culture of pop, commercialism, hype, shouting, self - indulgence, fashion, poor diction, etc. Together with the targeting of minors by commercial advertising, it amounts to a powerful, unhelpful influence on the attitudes, perception and behaviour

of children, which in turn has repercussions in the home, at school and in the turbulent adolescent years.

Even when watching television only occasionally over a few months, within the so-called 'family-viewing' time on British television (ie. before 9.0pm.), I found that young children were being educated in the terminology and nature of a wide range of human behaviours, including rape, male rape, torture, adultery, wife-battery, juvenile sexual intercourse, AIDS., child-abuse, paedophilia, child criminality, mugging techniques, car theft etc., etc. Add to this endless catalogue of inappropriate child-viewing, the obsession to lay bare, dissect and exploit every bizarre, anti-social, criminal, sexual or emotional human excess, in both works of fantasy and documentary, and you have a compelling educational medium pervading the living rooms of the land, which whets the appetite and extends the attitude/behaviour repertoire of the young, as well as other vulnerable, impressionable audiences, including criminals and psychopaths.

Sadly, television and videos are not the only media to do so in free societies. Driven by the media ethic that nothing is taboo except censorship itself, and also by the business ethic which makes audience ratings, market share, profit and sales targets sacred goals, the creative talents in radio, newspapers, books, magazines, films, pop music, theatre, advertising and computer software demonstrate a similar compulsion to include such inappropriate living-room material in all forms of freely-available expression.

Creativity, by definition, means breaking new ground. Commercial creativity requires breaking new ground in a way that results in commercial benefits. **The only way to be commercially creative in the use of titillation, smut, crudeness, sexual innuendo, explicit sex and violence, criminality, etc., is to continually extend the range of such expression beyond the limits of accepted standards of decency or normality.** This process, once under way, seems unremitting and insidious. Given the formative influence of mass-media on attitudes, and the power of the mass-media to render normal and commonplace that which isn't, it serves to undermine social norms and create conflicting moral tensions and instability within the home and society.

Anyone who opposes censorship, must accept some responsibility for the harmful consequences of all the vast gamut of expressions, which find responsive audiences in free societies.

There is also the exploitation of modern communication and information technology, in order to purvey easily accessed pornography, much of it within the law.

Indeed, the ever-growing Internet system of communication provides perhaps the ultimate, powerful, uncontrolled, unaccountable means of spreading all manner of harmful influence, including the ability of widely-dispersed, like-minded individuals to organise themselves into powerful anti-social cyber fraternities, be they criminals, paedophiles, anarchists, terrorists, race-hate groups etc. Again, there is a prevailing rationale which presents the Internet's unfettered freedom as its prime virtue and a force for "good".

There are many other examples of mass-media and fraternal expression with the potential for harmful social consequences, which are received by vulnerable, gullible, impressionable, corruptible and corrupt audiences, (as well as discerning ones). Suffice to say that in a free-for-all situation, by intention or default, media creators can and do use their freedom and their power  to :-  mislead; misinform; corrupt; incite and divide; promote prejudice; propagandize for bad / exclusive causes; invade and expose privacy; manipulate truth and use bias; cover up and promote issues and perceptions in response to greed, arrogance, bribery, fraternal self-interest, blackmail, commercial/financial imperatives; push the limits of decency; extend audience knowledge of the variety and techniques of violent, sadistic, sexual, criminal, offensive behaviour; destroy good/beneficial reputations or images; sustain or create unjustified good reputations or images; present as, and render normal, behaviour and attitudes which undermine moral concensus; promote permissiveness, materialism, cult of personality, self-indulgence, civil unrest; condition audience appetite for voyeurism ; promote self-centred indulgence, anarchy and decadence in the young.

Finally, I would say that the media has contributed to 'trends" in unhelpful social phenomena like (say) football hooliganism, vandalism, prison disturbance, permissiveness, promiscuity, rape, mugging, violent demonstrations, drug-taking, burglary, child abuse, homelessness, material profligacy, divorce, religious intolerance, pornography, delinquency, binge-drinking,  etc., to mention but a few. Sadly, a driving catalyst in all these British examples has been the exercise of media freedom to report, hype-up and normalise such behaviour.

**Of course, many of the consequences are harmless or beneficial, and freedom of <u>political</u> expression is essential in democracies, but what price freedom of expression, when its harmful effects ensure that so-called "free societies" are far from civilised**.

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Looking more specifically at fraternity, a useful model for understanding the world of human interaction, is to see it in terms of a dynamic between fraternities. In the social context of his time, Karl Marx

found it useful to emphasize the dynamic between different socio-economic fraternities. But a dynamic exists between a wide range of varied fraternities - racial, national, international, political, religious, cultural, occupational, etc.

For thousands of years, human kind has been dividing, mixing and blending in a hotch-potch of fraternities, sometimes living together in their own discrete territories, perhaps with their own language and culture, sometimes diffuse, intermingled and across territorial boundaries, sometimes exercising power in open or covert, back-scratching self-interest. History is nothing if it is not a catalogue of fraternal power struggles, conflict, conquest, conversion, migration, domination, (as well as expedient alliances) etc. on a grand scale. It is also the study of the influence of fraternal allegiances on the attitudes, perceptions and behaviour of individuals and groups.

Nowadays, a wide variety of fraternal grouping is sustained by popular taken-for-granted notions of liberty, in which freedom to associate, freedom of expression and religious freedom are seen as fundamental human rights.

Fraternities do not exist in a vacuum. The context in which they exist is a complex web of interacting social, political, economic, religious, national, international and legal structures and imperatives, which need to fit and work together for the greater good. Fraternities can be benign, or beneficial. For some, fraternal membership has served them well. But I suggest that it is the degree to which fraternities operate in blinkered, self-centred, "tribal" ways that is the cause of so much decadence, conflict and suffering. There can be no doubt that, for many millions of people, fraternal bigotry has led to inequity, exploitation, division, discrimination, deprivation, even bondage and genocide, and has been a serious impediment to local/global cooperative human endeavour.

Anthropologists are likely to define " a tribe" as a group with a shared identity, ties of ancestry, customs, patterns of belief, language and territory. It would also have its own forms of law, political organisation and hierarchy for decision-making, settling disputes and looking after the collective interests of the tribe, as well as ensuring the continuity of the prescribed tribal wisdom.

For a hypothetical tribal group living in isolation, out of touch with the rest of humanity, their exclusive world would be all they know, and they would have developed a self-sufficient mini-culture, into which all members would be conditioned from birth. They would be immersed in the ecology of their territory and probably have a shared, taken-for-granted folklore, spirituality and mythology, in which they would see

supernatural (spiritual) forces permeating every aspect of their lives, bestowing good or bad fortune in mysterious ways. They would derive tribal cohesion, security and a sense of belonging from sharing a traditional (prescribed) moral code, which would be underwritten and sanctioned by their spiritual superstitions and which would govern their attitudes and behaviour and perceived place in the natural order. Their sense of identity would <u>not</u> include a sense of being different from other groups.

But consider the effects of two tribes, known to each other but in adjacent territories, with different languages, beliefs, customs, morality and ways of perceiving the world. At the very least, they will be aware that they are different, and their sense of tribal identity must include being aware that <u>they belong to one group and not the other</u>. This simple phenomenon gives rise to a seemingly intractable social/psychological problem, which can be benign, but sadly lies at the root of so much human conflict, namely the "THEM & US" syndrome.

So long as they remain geographically separate, there should be little problem. However, should they come to share the same territory, and they continue with their different tribal customs and perceptions, then they must acquire a heightened sense of separate tribal identity, as they inevitably choose to associate with fellow tribal members. Integration is thus impeded and the possibility of misunderstanding, fear, suspicion and intolerance increased. If there is competition for resources, privilege, wealth and power, tribes will look after their own and the winners and losers perceived along tribal lines. Where there is inequity, the notion of struggle and the "Them & Us" divide will be taken into the tribal culture and tradition.

This divide, which by definition is the concommitant of fraternal grouping, ensures that societies are a complex of tensions, as fraternities of all kinds interact with each other. Inevitably, with perceived inequity and division, some of those tensions will be hostile, violent and/or impede human progress and unity. Such a situation exists in Europe (not least in Britain) as a result of the cultural insularity of  large numbers of immigrants as well as long-standing separatist groups.

All fraternities need some degree of internal organisation. For many, that organisation evolves into great institutions. This is particularly the case with some religions, which are the focus of the next chapter. Institutions do not exist to manage their own demise. On the contrary, it is in the nature of institutions that they create structures and procedures to ensure their own viability, continuity and growth. They may create an executive/hierarchical structure which exercises political, economic or media power on behalf of the fraternity. They may indoctrinate the young

and recruit converts. The executive may resurrect, promote and impose traditions, language, ritual and distinctive cultural activities and behaviour, in ways which shape the perceptions of members and serve to legitimise and perpetuate group exclusiveness and solidarity.

Tribal solidarity and loyalty can become "sacred" dogmas, sometimes enforced by coercion of various kinds. They can lead to catastrophic social consequences - in Northern Ireland, for example, where Protestants and Catholics have seemed unaware of their common humanity. One could also mention the Israelis and Palestinians in the Middle East, or (at the time of writing) the Shia and Sunni in Iraq, or a host of other examples throughout history. Dogmatists are either blind to alternative perceptions or tend to subdue, ignore or discredit them.

Tribal solidarity and loyalty (often supported by holy books) may also constrain expressions of love and friendship, the personal relationships and any ecumenical aspirations of individual members. For example, if someone within certain groups associates, or perhaps (say) marries across group boundaries, they run the very real risk of being treated as disloyal, disreputable or foolish, and may suffer unpleasant punishment, ostracism, even death, as a consequence. The consequences to lapsed Muslims and Hindus, especially females, can be particularly nasty.

The existence of certain groups may also force outsiders into new forms of narrow, exclusive association. For example, however much I identify with my fellow men, the fact that (say) those of a certain ethnic background establish exclusive, homogenous communities in certain neighbourhoods or towns or regions, and/or lobby on social issues as a group, forces me to regard myself as different from, and not one of them. I am compelled to be, and be seen as, a member of a different ethnic group, with all that that means in terms of playing the divisive tribal fraternity game.

Another example might be the rise of Scottish and Welsh nationalism in the UK. This movement has not been just about devolution of economic and political power to the regions, but has been loaded with tribal aspirations and the "Them & Us" syndrome, in which the English have been seen variously as "the old enemy", alien, predatory, oppressive, culturally threatening and, in some quarters, manifestly unwelcome, except as tourists. It has been nurtured on the myth that the Westminster parliament and British politics have been dominated by the English.

The Welsh language has a wonderful pedigree of literature, culture and song. But so has the English language in Wales. I have always been moved and inspired by the oratory and eloquence of English -

speaking Welsh politicians, educators, writers, poets, ministers of religion etc. Both languages should be celebrated and preserved. Unfortunately, the official imposition and spread of the Welsh language, which is gathering pace within Wales, can only serve to prevent mobility of English - speaking "outsiders" into Wales and to widen the schism between us.

It is a matter of sadness to me that my lifelong (tribal) sense of being British, my sense of responsibility and love for the diversity of landscape, poetry, music, literature and peoples of these islands, (which were instilled in me in my education and upbringing), are no longer my birthright.

For generations, England has been a melting pot, in which the integration of people from the rest of the UK into all aspects of society, and their dominance in its political leadership and education, have been taken-for-granted elements in the cultural identity of its people. The same degree of integration and warmth towards the English has not happened in Wales or Scotland. No doubt there are historical grievances, both real and mythological, which have been handed down through the generations in tribal folklore to keep the "Them and Us" going.

But, whatever happened in the past, in my lifetime at least, there has been no English conspiracy or domination. The English have not sought self - government or independence. English nationalism has not been strident (except for the recent globally - endemic, infantile antics of football, rugby and cricket supporters). Despite the efforts of 'This England' magazine, expressions of English nationalism have come to be seen by the English themselves as embarrassing and impolite in the context of their Britishness and their modern cosmopolitan society. The Union Jack has been the prefered flag, whilst the cross of St.George and St. George's Day have been largely ignored as meaningless, except for Boy Scout parades. (This of course is already beginning to change since devolution.) Neither is there an English national anthem, nor a national dress, and the rose is rarely thought of or flaunted as a symbol of Englishness. In Scotland and Wales, on the other hand, such overt exclusive nationalism and symbolism are seen as obligatory virtues.

It is perhaps inevitable that devolution and the ascendancy of Welsh and Scottish nationalism, have expedited the failure of the Great British experiment to construct one united nation on this tiny group of islands, despite centuries of trying, and this is happening just when the biggest constituent, England, had largely abandoned any claim to fraternal exclusivness in favour of a British national identity.

Rising, exclusive (tribal) nationalism in one region inevitably must impose separate tribal awareness on another. With the Welsh and

the Scots choosing paths of separate development, the English, (who were not consulted), by default, have had the path of separate development thrust upon them. And so I find myself reluctantly being drawn into assuming an exclusive English tribal identity. I have no choice, given the existence, assertiveness and exclusiveness of Welsh and Scottish nationalism. I now find myself compelled by the new context of fraternal separation, to play by the new rules of engagement and to seek parity with the other "nations" of the UK, by calling for an English parliament.

Having been confronted with the clear (now official) message that I am an English outsider, with no right to see Wales or Scotland as my own, I am aware of a subtle shift in my relationship with my Welsh and Scottish friends living in England. Once, we all "belonged" and shared a common, rich, diverse culture. Now, where once I never gave it thought, I am compelled to think of them as people who see themselves as different. I wonder if they also sense a shift in our relationship as the ascendent Welsh and Scottish nation-states lay claim to their allegience and cultural identity, and I, their English friend, am not included. In such a context, not only friendships but also mixed marriages, employment, shared resources, capital investment, and many other aspects of social organisation so easily become problematic and subject to the "Them and Us" perception.

We are now playing a new game, in which the UK is moving towards being a federation of tribal homelands. I do so hope that the inevitable, emerging English national identity does not feed on a nationalist mythology. I hope it rejects xenophobic, bigoted or even sentimental notions of cultural and racial purity, refrains from flag-waving, anthems and nationalist stridency on the international stage, and takes as normal its integrated cultural diversity with citizens who are blind to racial / fraternal differences and origins. Its focus should be to construct a cosmopolitan future for all who live within its borders.

The one redeeming feature of this UK break-up, due to devolution of political power, is that, apart from a few burnt holiday cottages in Wales, on the mainland at least, it has been comparatively violence -free. Separatist struggles, as Northern Ireland can testify, more often than not incur bloodshed.

Fraternities are probably natural social manifestations of the human animal, and in a situation of inter-tribal conflict, tribalism will be important to their survival. On the other hand, as I have suggested, tribalism also leads to narrow, exclusive fraternal attitudes and behaviour, which in turn can fuel relentless tribal conflict, division and suffering

within pluralist societies, between nation-states, and across national boundaries.

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I have suggested that the pursuit of selfish fraternal and individual freedoms can lead to inequity and the denial of others' rights. But the pursuit of equality is an essential antidote to such injustice and can help to purge democracies of discrimination and prejudice. For example, after a long campaign, the ordination of women priests in the Church of England was a welcome small step in the reluctant self-purging of that narrow exclusive fraternity. True it faced hostility and yet more fraternal schism in the Protestant religion, but that was due to the fraternity game rather than the pursuit of equality.

But the pursuit of equality (and individual liberty), whilst ostensibly a just cause, can also lead to the denial of others' rights. The normalising of equality for homosexuals in many aspects of life is one such example. Here it can be seen as directly responsible for harmful outcomes, when (say) male gay couples claim the right to æ°marryæ± and raise children born to surrogate mothers on their behalf. They would insist that equality with heterosexual couples should be their right in a free society. The moral right of every child to be born to and raised by his/her natural mother and father (especially mother) in a loving environment is conveniently overlooked. Similarly, gay couples' claims to parity of esteem and parity before the law, with heterosexual couples, in the fostering and adoption of children, ignores the right of children to the love of both a mother and a father. (As an aside, in some countries, gay couple parenting of adopted children is becoming accepted. If this must happen, then it should be prioritised in law to lesbian couples, since (as a generalisation) the child-mother bond and mothercraft are crucial.

Notions of liberty and equality have also challenged and affected the taken-for-granted process of marriage and child-rearing between heterosexual couples, particularly in western countries. The model scenario is that of a chaste man who meets a chaste woman, they fall in love, get married, perhaps raise children and stay happily together until death does them part. Sadly, the reality is often different. Feminism and the best of journalism have thankfully revealed the ways in which women and children have suffered subservience, abuse and oppression behind the social device of marriage. Also revealed has been the culpability of religions in this, as well as in the causes of poverty due to excessive child-rearing, and their role in stigmatising illegitimate children, unmarried mothers and divorcees. Nowadays, unmarried couples live together and raise children, single women have children, many single (and married) individuals have multiple sexual partners, married couples divorce when

they don't get along with each other any more, and equality within marriage or partnerships is more commonly perceived as normal and essential.

All of this seems reasonable to many people. Very good arguments, on the grounds of the right to freedom, equity and privacy, can be made to support these changes - and the old order <u>had</u> to change. It is good that many of the old taboos, relating to marriage have been challenged. There are just a few problems, however. **The pursuit of such adult freedoms cannot avoid implications for the welfare of children and society**.

Equality within marriage, for some women, is measured by their pursuit of career and the material good life, whilst the rearing of their young children (perhaps the most important of any human activity) is relegated to an inconvenient impediment, to be contracted-out or "managed" along with all the other domestic demands.

Successful, long-term, mutually-caring marriages are a triumph of human tolerance and selflessness, which not only bring purpose, fulfilment, stability and happiness to the partners concerned, but also provide the best circumstances for raising children, and bring social and practical benefits to society. Unstable parent relationships, separation, absenteeism and divorce result from intolerance and selfishness by one or both partners. They bring insecurity, unhappiness, even trauma to so many children, with long-term implications for their education and social development, and in turn for society.

The normality of adult promiscuity and sexual permissiveness is manifest in and sustained by the media, and is celebrated as proof of our maturity as a truly civilised, free society. Adults can get hurt but the damage it does to children is somehow overlooked. Children are accidentally conceived and so often brought into the world, unwanted, without the love of both their natural heterosexual parents, sometimes with the promiscuity disease AIDS, perhaps with the continuing promiscuous habit leading to a succession of "uncles", with all the problems that this can bring.

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Whilst the pursuit of equality is essential to the pursuit of universal human accord, it is regretably probable that genuine total equality is unattainable in free societies. Behind this assertion is the recognition that most adult human beings are, to some degree, agents in their own circumstances. Compare two hypothetical families, living in the same street in rented council housing. Both living on the same per-capita state benefits.

Family A - 4 children, who are always scruffy, dirty and well-known locally for being uncontrolled and a constant source of vandalism, bullying, stealing, etc. They do not conform or perform well at school. Parents smoke and drink a lot. They own a large dog. The house is abused, poorly furnished and dirty.

Family B - 2 children, adequately dressed in regularly laundered clothes, usually well-behaved and well-intentioned, progressing well at school. Parents like a drink but rarely do so because they see it as extravagant in their circumstances. The children come first. They keep the house and garden tidy. They often play with the children and take them to the library most weeks. Their diet is simple but healthy and planned. They manage to save small amounts to cover birthdays, Christmas and modest trips for the children.

Now these two families may be hypothetical, but are definitely not unrealistic. The point being made is that, in Britain at least, poverty is not caused by low income, so much as the inadequacy of some people to organise their lives. Family A has riches beyond the wildest dreams of millions of third-world people. Whilst the the injection of money in appropriate ways will obviously help Family A, simply giving them more state money will not solve the problem. What they suffer from is poverty of skills, intellect, attitude and perhaps self-esteem. By the same token, at '49"the other end of the spectrum, there will always be people who are more able to compete in the human race and achieve a higher standard and quality of life.

Even if all people receive the same level of income, there will always be wide differences in the way they manage their lives. Everyone is an agent in their own success or demise. Inequality is therefore likely to always be endemic in democracies. This, of course, is no reason to reject equality as a legitimate aspiration of civilised societies. On the contrary, **the recognition of the need for equality for others, and not just for oneself, should impose a moral duty on the most able to care for the least able and to help them and their children to acquire useful life-skills** .

In summary -  We are supposed to be  an intelligent , creative species. Certainly those two attributes have been 'successfully' developed for the purposes of technology, commerce, warfare and  the indoctrination and  marketing of mythology.  On the other hand, as a species, we have shown little creative intelligence in developing organisational structures and patterns of belief and action which ensure conflict-free, cooperative human enterprise, and the establishment of the ultimate egalitarian fraternity, ie. the global human family on which this planet depends.

The sacred call for liberty, equality and fraternity, on its own, has to be seen as problematic, because, in practice, it is often essentially a selfish philosophy of demand. It provides a moral rationale for the pursuit of aspirations, beliefs and actions, and the exercise of liberty, by diverse, competing groups and individuals who pursue their own exclusive self-interest. It often fails to engender the more important attributes of unselfishness, duty, and civic and moral responsibility towards all of one's fellow humans."

# Religious Tribalism - The Great Divider

In the previous soliloquy (Liberty, Equality, Fraternity) I attempted to explore the harmful consequences of fraternal tribalism. I think it is important to focus on tribalism of the religious kind, in order to expose the fact that it is such an on-going, taken-for-granted social virtue, and yet can have horrendous social consequences.

Religious belief and practice involve a psychological dependence on superstition, and come in all sorts of forms .**At their best, there can be no doubt that religions can and do provide security, fellowship, support and inspiration to their individual adherents. Having acquired a psychological dependency on given patterns of belief, worship, mythology, liturgy, or simply the concept of a personal loving god, many individuals are certainly helped to survive the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune", find solace and guidance and achieve a sense of overall purpose to their lives. Undoubtedly some also see their faith as the source of their creativity, altruism and self-sacrifice. When these qualities are directed unconditionally at the real needs of others, then the world is a better place because of such people**. Religions then can be (and often are) a force for good.

Unfortunately, the pious tend to rest their case there and not recognise that such qualities and most good moral constructs are not Christianity's, nor any other religion's exclusive prerogative or invention. Their tendency to insist that godlessness begets immorality and anarchy is quite absurd and an insult to large numbers of non-believers who dedicate their lives and talents to "good works".

Sadly, paradoxically, this same dependency also feeds the vices of tribal exclusiveness, bigotry, prejudice, social division, suspicion, fear and intolerance. The complacency of some pious adherents makes them culpable. Their faith is tenacious and blinkered. Perhaps this is because those who engage in religious belief must reason and rationalise from within a perceptual framework which assumes their particular superstitions to be reality, and which defies reasoned argument to the contrary. Somehow this tenacity is currently ensuring the survival of the Roman Catholic Church despite the disgrace of widespread child-abuse by clergy. And Islam seems to be going from strength to strength despite widespread atrocities by many of its most committed followers.

The Bible and the Koran are great works , but full of ambiguities, contradictions and dogma, much of it violent and hateful. We should however remember (to repeat) that they are NOT the religion. They are just books with words inside. The Koran is not Islam. The Bible is not Christianity. Religions are manifest in the behaviour and beliefs of

adherents, based upon their particular interpretation of the words in the books. As I have said, there are obviously good, caring tolerant Moslems, but there are also Moslems who have thrown acid in the faces of women not wearing the veil or deprived girls of an education, or strapped explosives to themselves to be detonated in a crowded place, or killed apostates or stoned to death women who had sex outside marriage. - I could go on, and on. All are manifestations of the practice of Islam. Christianity too has a history of depravity, which is conveniently overlooked when people say "As a Christian, I -" and they go on to claim some virtue arising from their religion.

There are over 2000 different Christian sects, all interpreting the Bible differently, and all tribal in their exclusiveness, some of them even engaged in internecine conflict. Meanwhile, as I write, it is not the American-led forces that are destroying Iraq. It is Islam. Whatever the rights and wrongs of the ill-conceived American-led invasion of that long-suffering country, it did present a long-overdue opportunity to build a truly prosperous, free and peaceful society. Sadly, anti-western jihad extremists, and Shia vs. Sunni tribal warfare are perpetrating atrocities and destruction on a massive scale. The pious do rest their case too easily and disingenuously.

In order to survive, religions do sometimes adjust their interpretation of their "holy book" and resort to pragmatic, secular strategies. The ordination of Protestant Church of England women priests was somewhat grudgingly achieved after a secular Women's-Lib movement had drawn attention to women's rights. The Roman Catholic Church is under similar pressure to follow suit, but that is likely to be even more grudgingly resisted.

Apart from adjusting dogma to accommodate changing secular social norms, appeasement, financial investment and the accumulation of wealth, warfare, monopolistic claims on secular virtue, political power, marketing,  are all part of the repertoire of pragmatic strategies which religions use to sustain their cause and prevent disaffection of members.

But they are obliged to retain a core of fundamental superstitious dogmas which resist not only challenging secular reason, but also alternative competing superstitious perceptions. Doing so serves to sustain tribal cohesion, identity and exclusiveness, and set them apart from outsiders and other groups.

Superstition as well as tribal identity are learned. We are not born with them. That is why, to ensure tenacity and solidarity, religions indoctrinate their young. The brainwashing of children into narrow sectarian dogma and superstition is (again) taken for granted as virtuous

by most people, especially if it is into the "right" religion. The fact that most believers are committed to the belief system of their parents, says more about the conditioning of children than about divine revelation or intervention, or about individual choice through reason. Dependency is achieved by repeated presentation of the prescribed mythology to malleable, vulnerable young minds and reinforced throughout life by in-group (tribal) ceremony, ritual, emotional experience and imagery.

It is difficult for believers to stand back and see their own religion as but one of many, each claiming supreme authority by divine appointment. If they could do so, then they would find it somewhat immoral to close the minds of the young and deny them the right to be raised with open, sceptical, enquiring minds, and in the course of time to be free to develop their own responses and allegiances (if any) to the various religious claimants on truth.

Most religions have this built-in, tribal continuity mechanism, by which children are indoctrinated into the faith, grow up and raise children who are indoctrinated into the faith, and so on. Procreation is therefore a high priority, non-negotiable dogma of most religions. Religions are therefore a major causative factor in the pressures, poverty, conflict and suffering, as well as the environmental damage, which derive from unrestrained human fertility and a huge and expanding human population. One obvious paradigm is the Roman Catholic Church.

Another reason for the tenacity of religions is that they usually use powerful forms of reward and punishment, invoking spiritual/divine authority for so doing. Coercion is a recruitment and compliance strategy common to many religions. It may be in the form of subtle but powerful threats of judgment and hell-fire disseminated by tribal elders, witch doctors, priests, popes, etc. to those who deviate. The apparent compliance rewards of eternal salvation, a place in heaven, higher-order reincarnation etc. are forms of coercion in that they are denied to those who do not submit to the prescribed spiritual orthodoxy. Similarly, there is the coercive notion of sin, guilt and remorse attached to doubt and deviance by believers.

At another extreme, the tenets of some established religions, in some countries, are enforced in law, even invoking the barbarism of corporal and capital punishment for apostacy and dissenters. Often deviation, doubt and rational scepticism are suppressed or responded to as heresy with a variety of sanctions. Even in so-called free, open societies, fear of violent retribution muzzles free-thinkers and open, honest opinion about Islam, for example.

Religious tribal coercion and its concomitant sacred obligation for tribal loyalty, constrain or prevent personal relationships, love and

fellowship across religious boundaries, sometimes fueling hundreds of years of hostility between groups even those sharing the same national membership.

In so far as religious tribal culture has a hold over the thought, attitudes and behaviour of adherents, religions have been directly and indirectly responsible for a vast range of evil. History is littered with examples, some of the most bloody, horrific kind, perpetrated on both individuals, such as the genital mutilation of children and the torture of heretics or reluctant converts, and on whole communities such as in inter-religious, tribal warfare. Others, like the suppression of women and girls, have spread suffering and inequity over generations. The sacredness of religious belief ensures that such behaviour continues today.

Throughout human history, religions have been manifest in many and varied forms. Thousands have come and gone and exist today - they are , after all, social constructs and not divine creations. Some have endured and developed great institutions with considerable power and cultural control, particularly in the mass media, politics and education. In some countries the established religion is synonymous with government and is thus able to exercise authoritarian control over its people. It must by definition be a closed, intolerant society, and isolationist or confrontational in its relationship with the rest of the world. It will be in their interest, as with all religions, to spread their particular ideology to other societies, but they will have at their disposal all the resources of the state. The involvement of religious politics in terrorism, subversion and warfare is common enough.

In open societies, the rights of individuals and religious institutions to practise and purvey their belief systems, and to condition the young, are deeply embedded in notions of freedom and human rights and even assisted in law. In Britain for example, a religiously-motivated political executive (a Labour government no less, led by Tony Blair) set in train a growing network of "faith" schools, paid for from taxes and difficult to reverse. Social cohesion is certainly not the aim.

Whether religions operate in open societies or through religious-political authoritarian regimes, they can enjoy considerable power to pursue fraternal self-interest, recruitment and tribal continuity, through economic, political, media and educational means. From this position of strength, religions are thus able to nurture their own exclusiveness. As I have said, this can encourage prejudice, and draw veils of intolerance and suspicion between individuals and great schisms of hostility and fear between peoples. This process is made more likely by the perceptual limits of tribal wisdom, which ensure that believers must see all humans

who are not of their faith, as outsiders, misguided, a potential or real threat, the cause of evil, inferior , or simply lost souls who need converting to the true faith. Implicit or explicit in what their belief says to outsiders is the assertion that "We are right and you are wrong."

Also inevitably, they are caught up in inter-tribal rivalry and competition for power, expansion and for people's minds. In such a situation, in-group loyalty can become a sacred obligation, especially when competing perceptions are taken to be blasphemous and a threat against the tribal god itself. "If you are not with us, you are against us, and (our) god." It is just a small step from this mutually uncomprehending stand off for war, suicide-bombing, genocide or persecution to also become sacred obligations.

Paradoxically, both winners and losers in inter-religious conflicts become more tenacious from the experience, the former because they will be obviously in a stronger position to assert their will, and will see their ascendency as vindication that God was on their side, the latter because they will perceive their sacrifice as holy virtue in the fight against evil outside forces. And so the tribal "Them & Us" mentality begets suffering and struggle, which in time become part of the folklore of the tribe, complete with (ancestral) martyrs and legends. A history of struggle and martyrdom seems to be an essential element in the divine credentials of religions. The martyrdom of countless millions persecuted <u>by</u> religions is somehow conveniently overlooked.

Given this competition, which for the major players is on a global scale, no religion is going to actively promote population-reduction amongst its members, or abandon its doctrines, evangelism or its tribal identity, in an unselfish, ecumenical coalition with other religions, or encourage open-minded raising of their young. Even the hundreds of disparate Christian tribal sub-groups, which participate in the World Council of Churches have failed to achieve unity after fifty years of trying. Indeed the mighty Roman Catholic Church has been conspicuous by its absence from that worthy effort.

Religious fraternities then, acting in tribal ways, impede the essential changes needed to achieve harmony and equity on a finite planet. **The aim of universal harmony and of just one global human tribe, is claimed as their own by most religions, but only from within their own tribal mind-set. - "We have the true faith. If only everyone would join us and believe what we believe, then there would be peace and harmony. Until then, we will continue our holy struggle. Our sacred tribal identity and culture must be sustained and not compromised." In a world crying out for unity, religions are monstrous agents of division**.

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It would be wrong to present a critique of religion without also considering two other alternative, but related, life-stances - humanism and atheism:-

<u>Humanism - The Flawed Promise!</u>: Humanists accept a common responsibility for each other and for the legacy which they will pass to future generations. They advocate and practise respect, tolerance and friendship towards others, irrespective of class, creed, race, etc. They recognise the need for cooperation across cultures and for sharing understanding and creativity in order to solve problems. They oppose selfish consumerism, prejudice and exploitation, and promote freedom of thought, equity, conservation, population restraint, and human values and action based on reason and tolerance in an open society. They have a tradition of altruism and self-sacrifice. On the face of it, Humanism offers a means of achieving a"New Order". If only everyone was a Humanist!

But, as I have pointed out, each religion would say the same - "If only everyone was a Catholic, a Muslim, etc." Like them, Humanism can offer a way forward only if there is a massive conversion to their ranks. This is a naive hope not least because organised Humanism tends to operate through small, intellectual, exclusive debating groups, which are unlikely to provide succour or inspiration to the common man/woman or offer an alternative to religious gatherings, which feed "the spirit". Besides, the world's major religions use art, architecture, music, theatre and wealth, and have vast propaganda and evangelical machinery working on human minds from the cradle to the grave, whereas the ethics of Humanism are rightly too suspicious of such strategies to use them in a counter, propaganda and recruitment offensive.

The aforementioned Humanist ideals are not exclusive to Humanists, any more than the much-claimed "Christian Ethics" are the exclusive prerogative or property of Christians. There has to be something else that makes Humanists different.

Just as there is a core of fundamental beliefs specific to a given religion, which sets it apart from others, so also are Humanists distinguished by their cardinal non-belief in a deity, their active repudiation, as superstition and mythology, of divine revelation and deity-worship, and their challenge of the morality of religious influence and power - all of which sets Humanism apart from other groups and serves to make it exclusive and even adversarial in relation to religions. This simple fact alone renders  institutional Humanism impotent when it comes to breaking down religious divisions and promoting the

commonalty of humanity. Humanists individually respect and care about all others, but Humanism cannot embrace (say) Islam, Judhaism or Christianity, and does nothing to bring them together.

Let us be clear that this in no way invalidates Humanism. It is an essential movement, which offers a home and fellowship to its kindred spirits, many of whom would experience closetted loneliness in intolerant, religiously-dominated societies. It challenges and exposes bigotry and the closing of minds. Humanism also carries the torch of freethought and freedom in a confused and unjust world. Its contribution to human progress is potentially considerable. Long may it survive and prosper!

<u>Atheism:</u> There are other people who have no allegience to any religious or anti-religious group, for whom prayer or theism is not a factor in their moral code and who effectively practice actual or de-facto atheism. Their life-stances are varied and individual and they may or may not subscribe to Humanism or the concept of the global family. What they have in common is that religion is irrelevant to their everyday exercise of judgment and moral action. They are not usually organised into exclusive atheist groups and therefore have no collective voice or power <u>as</u> atheists.

Some notable examples in the 20th century remind us that there can be other atheists who achieve power and seek to coercively organised whole populations into political/national groups, in which religious institutions and sacred religious dogmas are seen as potentially subversive, and suppressed or replaced by sacred political ones. Here, once again, the means and ends are flawed. To the fanatic it will be obvious that powerful, atheistic political control offers the only means of controlling population numbers, achieving shared patterns of belief essential for national unity, and managing the environment and life-styles for the benefit of all. The paradox here, as with that of fundamental religious despotism, is that the price to be paid is to forfeit "freedom".

All too often, history has shown that political despotism, whether of the theistic, religious kind, or the atheistic kind, is sustained by oppression and severe restrictions on individual freedom. Cult figures, cult dogma and propaganda are used to reinforce the normalcy and "truth" of the prescribed wisdom. To dissent is heretical. The political executive may well be secretive and various strategies used to prevent contamination by alternative perceptions. Such regimes must be closed orders, resistant to change, perceiving outsiders as a threat, and more likely to pursue unilateral objectives rather than openly cooperate in strategies for global harmony.

<u>In Summary</u>: **Religions and non-religious organisations like Humanism and despotic atheism, are fundamentalist in their core**

**beliefs. Each set of core beliefs makes its adherents dissenters from all the others. They are, by definition locked into ideological laagers in which other different ideologies are often seen as threatening. Excluding Humanism, which at this time is not institutionalised or power hungry, they divide the human race into self-perpetuating, competing, entrenched and exclusive tribal groups.**

**Given the (genetically programmed?) propensity of humans to believe/worship supernatural inventions, within exclusive tribal groups, a way has to be found to recognise and respect this fact and yet at the same time bring people together in a universally-shared neutral belief system, which makes global human fellowship paramount, so that we all can live in peace and unity**. I suggest such a system in Part 2.

# Compulsory Education - The Lost Opportunity

Around the world, nation states quite rightly impose compulsory education on their young. No doubt they would all claim to be doing so because children have a right to receive 'educationæ', whatever is meant by that word. In practice however, compulsory education is also recognised and used as a primary means of social engineering. As such, its organisation, methods, curriculum and aims have always been shaped and manipulated by religious and/or political agencies with the power to do so.

When, by reason of historical continuity (and many other factors), the involvement and influence of a particular religion, in education, has become established, then it often becomes risky for politicians to challenge it and expedient for those in political power to sustain it. (Good Christian credentials seem to be compulsory even in America where religion should play no part in education.)

In extreme cases, imposed religious indoctrination in schools is also a vehicle for ensuring political control and conformity, for example in some Muslim countries where totalitarian politics and religion are so intertwined.

In Britain, Christian involvement has a strong historical continuity behind it. In primary schools particularly, Christian evangelism and control has been endemic and enshrined in law, despite the fact that Britain's population has not been homogenous as far as religion is concerned. Providing a platform for Protestant and Catholic evangelism in schools, has been and is an anachronism, which has led to discrimination, social division and conflict.

Instead of dealing with this problem by removing religious indoctrination and management from state schools, our religiously-motivated government has seen fit to exacerbate it by actually extending power and control to all faiths and by spending tax-payers' money to open new faith schools.

Mainly through pupil-admissions policies and staff appointments, particularly at primary level, state funding supports discrimination for and against staff and pupils, according to religious criteria, and the law ensures that indoctrination is promoted. Dissenters within schools, who speak out, are made conspicuous and vulnerable. As a primary school teacher, I saw how teachers, pupils and parents were compromised daily over acts of worship and religious education. Those with a different faith or no faith felt, or were obliged to participate with sham conviction, in acts of worship, liturgy and homily which were

anathema to them or their parents. Some parents, against their principles, allowed their children to participate in order to avoid the stigma of their child being different. Others, like the children of Jehovah's Witnesses were segregated during assemblies and other compromising activities. For teachers to dissent or try to opt out of such activities could be seen as undermining the school's aims and contrary to its policy, even unprofessional. It could cause tension between staff and be perceived as an inappropriate influence on pupils by those parents and managers, who subscribed to the mythology of religious dogma. It could also act as a barrier to promotion. Silence, obsequiousness and hypocrisy can be a pragmatic compromise, but they can weigh heavily on the conscience. To avoid potential dissent, there can also be a tendency to appoint new staff with the "right" religious credentials and thereby move towards a closed-order institution with even greater evangelical purpose.

Latterly, Muslim and Hindu schools in Britain, established under the same legal entitlement as that of Christian schools, raise apprehension about racial as well as religious social division. Defenders of the established Christian monopoly in British education, must see that the same apprehension should apply to them also. Their sectarian egoism gets in the way of detached perception. Because the Christian churches have clung tenaciously to their power in education, and have not given way to universality, Moslems and others have, quite reasonably, demanded parity. Given their conflicting different belief systems, religions seem unable to see the arrogance of their assumed divine appointment as purveyors of truth and exercisers of power and influence over children.

Meanwhile, non-believers, non-conformists and other minority religious groups resent the fact that their taxes support the established church and sectarian schools which are not of their choosing, and Humanists and free-thinkers rightly bemoan the the immorality of denying pupils their right to an open, informed and unbiased education.

Social division is created and nurtured by a wide variety of agencies. In Britain today, for example, the Roman Catholic and Protestant "communities" of Northern Ireland, mosques and the Muslim "community", mono-ethnic urban connurbations, the Scottish Nationalist Party and Plaid Cwmru (in the context of British national aspiration), other churches and sects, Asian community centres, schools, etc., etc., are just some agencies by which exclusiveness and separatism are celebrated and promoted. Each of them has its own moral logic, on which its actions and existence are predicated, and which they would invoke as their inalienable right in a free society.

It might reasonably be argued that they all contribute to the richness of human diversity, and so they do. But sadly, they also nurture the schisms of tribalism and social division within national boundaries. All but one of the examples given are exclusive by definition and cannot be otherwise.

**The one exception is schools. Schools do not need to be exclusive. Schools offer perhaps the only agency available to us, with the potential to be <u>inclusive</u>, to bring <u>all</u> people together, without vested sectarian or racial influence, and to nurture universal fellowship in the minds of rising generations.    Within an educational system, which is state-controlled and compulsory, to do otherwise is a failed obligation and a lost opportunity**.

# Crime and Punishment -
# Peaches and Cream Injustice

The endemic nature of crime seems an enduring problem in most societies and for centuries it has occupied the minds and efforts of clever and well-intentioned people. Psychologists, sociologists, criminologists have conducted studies and written countless books and papers on the subject. Informed by these disciplines and armed with the wonders of science and technology, all manner of strategies have been developed to prevent and deal with it - laws, police, courts, prisons, etc. Great systems of educational, political and religious control have evolved, aiming and claiming to deliver a morally-utopian future. Sadly, despite all this, not only are these systems themselves not immune from corruption, but the whole of the struggle to establish universal responsibility and respect between people and to relegate crime to the history books, has failed miserably.

There are closed, authoritarian states, both political and religious, where the rates of crime are allegedly very low. But it is often apparent that in such states either the statistics are false, or the low crime rate is achieved by means of severe limitations to personal freedom, excessive oppressive treatment of offenders, human rights abuses and lack of democracy, all of which are themselves tantamount to serious crime and abuse of power, by international standards.

Whatever the state, common to all attempts to deal with crime, as defined by state law, is the almost universal assumption that punishment is a morally -justified and sensible response, not only because it acts as a deterrent but also because it is considered axiomatic to the notion of justice. Offenders should get their "just desserts". Like peaches and cream, crime and punishment belong to each other. All of us, especially the victims of crime, feel that an injustice has occured if an offender goes unpunished or the punishment is considered inadequate.

In Britain, punishment meted out by the courts is usually in the form of fines or imprisonment, which are largely predicated on the punishment principle. Deprivation of liberty of movement is not in itself considered sufficient. Limitations on social intercourse, privacy and personal choice are also expected. Imprisonment is not expected to be pleasant or a happy, rewarding experience. It is mainly to punish and deter.

To be fair, in Britain there are also enlightened attempts to deal with criminals by other means which are less punitive. Probation, anti-

social behaviour orders (ASBOs) and community service are three examples, but even here victims and critics often feel that justice has not been done because the element of punishment of the offender has not been sufficient and the courts have been soft in their sentencing. Even the verb "to sentence" is loaded with punitive meaning.

On a global scale, the range of punishments given to offenders covers the full gammut of human bestiality, from corporal to capital punishment and all manner of torture in between. As I have mentioned, states that are dominated by extremes of religious and political bigotry, seem to find it necessary to employ such barbarism to maintain their power and control. It is also reasonable to assume that, in all countries, unethical clandestine law-enforcement methods are perpetrated illegally by rogue elements.

Even so, here in Britain we like to think our justice system is a model to which other states aspire. Here, justice is not simply the rule of law. It is also seen as equality before the law. All should be treated equally without discrimination. Such justice is said to be blind to race, class, wealth, possessions or position in society. Justice also carries with it the notion of fairness. Laws and legal processes are constructed with reasonableness and fairness in mind. For justice to be perceived as having been done, the legal process and its outcomes must be seen by observers as reasonable and fair to both victims and alleged offenders, as well as to society as a whole.

The problem is that laws and legal proceedings are not objective, reliable instruments for administrating justice, because they are subject to the influences of costs, political intervention, discrimination, corruption, quality of advocacy, people's honesty, media coverage, public pressure, attitudes, value judgments and differing perceptions of what is reasonable and fair - all of which are notoriously inconsistent and subjective. (In case the reader believes that the British legal process is independent of political control, consider the early release of unrepentent viscious IRA murderers from jail, following decades of extortion. Membership of that illegal organisation entitled offenders to preferential treatment, whilst non-member criminals, were not freed and were thus discriminated against.)

So British justice, whilst it is pretty good, is far from perfect. Unfortunately it fails to prevent crime in the first place. The police and the treatment of offenders are expected to prevent crime as well as to deal with it when it happens. In practice, they must focus on the latter. Undoubtedly, in doing so, they deter and prevent some potential crime, but effective prevention can only be achieved by addressing the causes, not the consequences.

We all go through life making choices. Why do some of us choose to be good while others choose to be bad? Why are some of us peaceful and respectful to others, while some are aggressive and anti-social? Why are some of us unscrupulously honest, while others seek to embezzle, steal, lie, cheat? In theory, we are free to choose. In practice we are not, for the simple reason that we all bring to those choices all the accumulated baggage of circumstance.

The root causes of crime lie in social context, social conditioning (family, community and society, particularly in childhood), body chemistry  and mental state. From these the individual acquires the complicated set of attitudes, perceptions and moral framework which inform and determine his choices. The legal process recognises some of the physiological determinants of anti-social behaviour and is more tolerant towards offenders who are mentally ill or immature and therefore deemed to be less responsible for their actions. But social conditioning and other forms of physiological determinants of behaviour are not readily accepted as causative factors in adults. The offender is assumed to have been able to detach himself from his established attitudes and perceptions, adopt alternative ones and to make different choices, ie. to change his personality if he wanted to. But of course he cannot choose to do that unless his behaviour determinants predispose him to do so. They presumably haven't, and his choices are therefore constrained and influenced by those established and affective at the time.

I am trying to justify two points. **If one accepts the reality of cause and effect on human behaviour, then : - (i) those psycho- socio factors which influence "personality", especially motherhood, parenting, family, school, the media, local community and peer-group norms, etc., as well as physical/mental well-being, need to be the target of government and voluntary action and spending;**

**(ii) in a caring society, the concept of justice must balance the perception of the offender as bad and deserving of punishment, with a perception of the offender as victim of circumstance and deserving of compassion**.

# PART 2
## Soliloquies of Action

## Population Reduction - The First Priority

Predatory culling, changing habitat conditions and the law of diminishing returns are natural processes, which sooner or later control excess numbers of over-fertile wild animals. The human species as a whole is not immune from these processes, but by manipulating the environment and successfully competing against their own kind for limited resources, <u>some</u> humans achieve immunity for themselves. Others are not so lucky.

Over the years, the attrition of war, crime, famine, accident and disease removes large numbers of people from the face of the earth. In doing so, it also removes their potential to multiply and add to the demands made upon the environment and to reduce the per-capita returns of the living. Despite this, the human population continues to grow at an alarming rate.

The deliberate culling of animals by humans  for various reasons, not least in the interests of the animals culled, is a well-established wildlife management practice. Where nature  is allowed to take its course, it too manages numbers through diminishing returns and predation, with suffering and death of animals as part of the process. Similarly, a deliberate planned reduction in the number of humans would benefit our species and the planet and could be achieved humanely without suffering. But such a proposal challenges and threatens deeply-embedded institutional and personal moral frameworks and has too many uncomfortable ramifications for it to be a cause celebre of old-order politicians, aspiring parents-to-be or priests. Since all three could be the means by which population reduction is achieved, it will be necessary to convince them that population-reduction is necessary, and to demonstrate that real benefits would follow.

The consequences of over-population have been expressed loudly and clearly for many years now. No one should claim ignorance. Whatever else is said in this book, one proposal which is unequivocal and which over-rides all others, and bears repeating, is this:-

**If <u>all</u> people are to achieve and sustain the good life, particularly as  epitomised by the material prosperity of affluent**

**societies, in harmony with each other and the whole of nature, in perpetuity, then human population numbers must be reduced**.

Clearly, just as the law of diminishing returns, due to over population, operates to bring per-capita disadvantages, so also does the reverse law of <u>increasing</u> returns, by reducing excessive population, serve to bring per-capita benefits. If population numbers were reduced sufficiently, a situation could be reached in which all humans could thrive in a symbiotic relationship with the planet.

At the very least, a significant reduction would ensure tremendous global benefits. Fewer people <u>must</u> cause less pollution; consume less energy, food, materials; damage or destroy less natural habitat; enjoy a more sustainable lifestyle; and leave a better per-capita legacy for succeeding generations.

The process of increasing benefits, resulting from a significantly declining population, is a chain reaction of cause and effect, which can be demonstrated by a simple exercise in logical brainstorming. All you need is a group of one or more people (preferably governments, synods, popes, school classes etc.), a pen and a large sheet of paper. Here is what you do :-

(1) Begin by writing at the top of the sheet the incomplete statement – "If there were significantly fewer people......................".

(From now on use brainstorming techniques to create a chain of cause and effect benefits which follow from this predication.)

(2) Draw an arrow and write down one benefit which would result from a much smaller population.

(3) Let this benefit become the new premise for other benefits, and so on.

(4) In no time at all, you will have before you a cascade of benefits. But don't stop there. Go back to the start and choose another line of thought. To help you get into the swing of it, the Cascade Charts 1 and 2 show <u>some</u> obvious initial benefits like :- less energy consumption, fewer waste products etc., but I have extrapolated just two lines of cause and effect, which would derive from there being fewer vehicles on the road and less food consumed.

The charts are just a taster. There are many more variations and additions, which add up to an overwhelming justification for human population reduction as an essential means of ameliorating, if not solving, many of the man-made problems (actual and potential) which face life on this planet. Participants in this activity will certainly be convinced that the law of diminishing returns works <u>in reverse</u> for humans as well as cows.

## Cascade Chart 1

If there were significantly fewer people in the world.......

etc. | fewer houses needed | less sewage | less water consumption | fewer vehicles | less energy consumption | fewer mouths to feed | less waste | etc.

less noise pollution | less air pollution | fewer car parks | fewer roads needed | less energy used in production & use of vehicles | less material consumption in vehicle manufacture

healthier environment

less ozone damage

more urban land for parks & development

more country-side

extended life of finite energy & material resources (eg. oil)

etc.

less acid rain

less urban spread

more wildlife habitat

more food potential per capita

fewer power stations needed

less take-up of air-borne pollutants by crops

healthier trees & lakes

etc.

more wildlife

more trees

less pollution

etc.

lower traffic density

etc.

less illness

lower per capita health costs

improved leisure potential

better timber resources

etc.

safer roads

more cycle use (safer)

healthier workforce

even less car use

improved per capita production

improved school performance of children

etc.

etc.

fewer accidents per capita

healthier population

etc.

etc.

etc.

etc.

etc .

reduced carbon emissions

reduced global warming

**IMPROVED QUALITY OF LIFE**
**& SURVIVAL OF HUMAN SPECIES**

This cascade suggests just a few of the benefits that follow from the world having fewer vehicles on roads. It could be extended to include aircraft and shipping and is by no means complete.

# Cascade Chart  2.

If there were significantly fewer people in the world……..

etc. fewer houses    less    less water    fewer    less energy    fewer mouths    less    etc.
     needed       sewage    needed    vehicles   consumption     to feed      waste

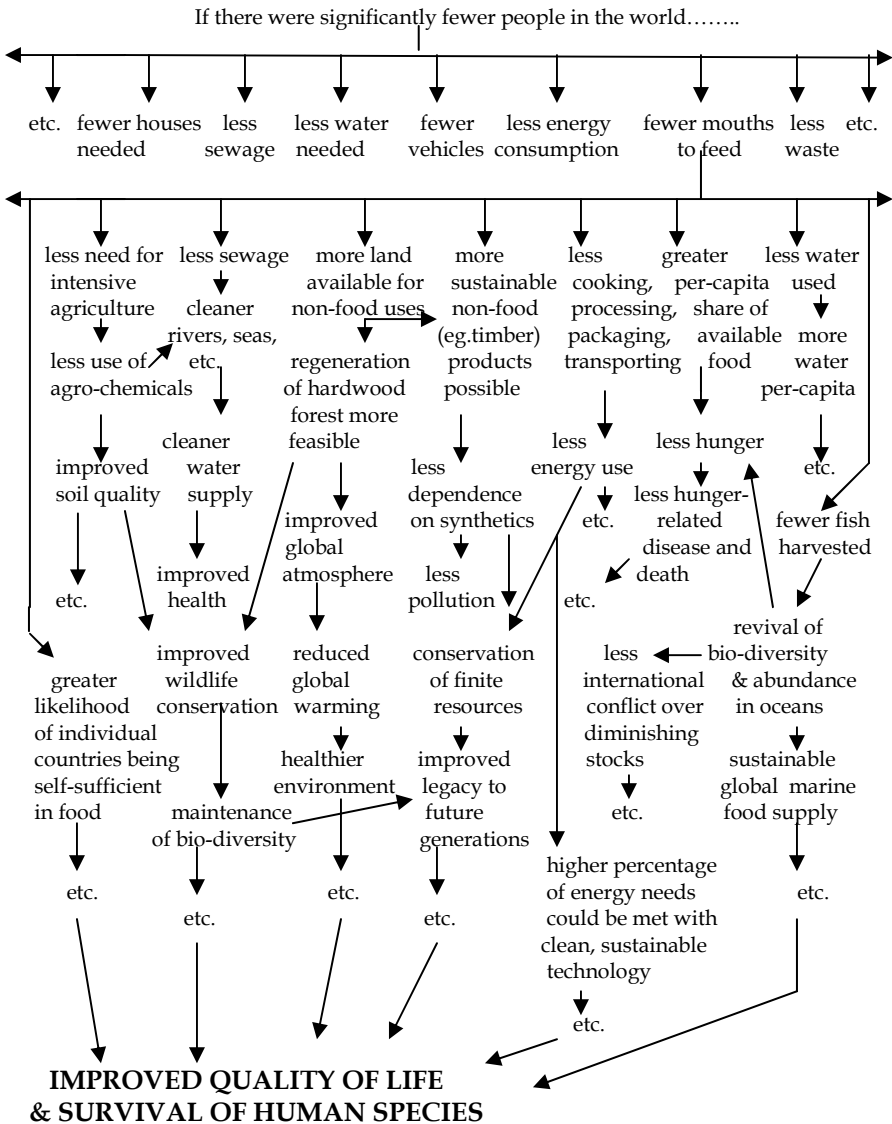less need for    less sewage    more land    more    less    greater    less water
intensive                    available for    sustainable    cooking,    per-capita    used
agriculture    cleaner    non-food uses    non-food    processing,    share of
           rivers, seas,               (eg.timber)    packaging,    available    more
less use of    etc.    regeneration    products    transporting    food    water
agro-chemicals             of hardwood    possible                 per-capita
                       forest more
                       feasible                    less    less hunger
improved    cleaner            less    energy use                 etc.
soil quality    water    improved    dependence        less hunger-
           supply    global    on synthetics    etc.    related    fewer fish
                    atmosphere               disease and    harvested
etc.    improved            less               death
        health    improved    pollution    etc.
greater    reduced               revival of
likelihood    improved    global    conservation    less    bio-diversity
of individual    wildlife    warming    of finite    international    & abundance
countries being    conservation        resources    conflict over    in oceans
self-sufficient        healthier    improved    diminishing    sustainable
in food        environment    legacy to    stocks    global  marine
        maintenance        future            food supply
        of bio-diversity        generations    etc.
etc.
        etc.    etc.    etc.    higher percentage    etc.
                            of energy needs
                            could be met with
                            clean, sustainable
                            technology

                            etc.

**IMPROVED QUALITY OF LIFE**
**& SURVIVAL OF HUMAN SPECIES**

This cascade suggests just a few benefits that follow from the world
having fewer mouths to feed. It is by no means complete.

**In a nutshell, these cascades show that reducing world human population is crucial to achieving greater per - capita and sustainable benefits on a global scale**.

But how might population-reduction be achieved? It has to be faced that the deliberate reduction of the human predator in an ecological balancing act, for his own good and for the good of the global habitat on which he and his descendants depend, raises all sorts of uncomfortable religious, moral, social and political questions. As I suggested in Part 1, human ignorance and selfishness, encouraged and sustained by religious dogma and powerful economic and social moralities, which promote childbirth and population-increase as self-evident virtues, are significant causes of population growth.

Politicians are culpable in that they find it expedient to present themselves as supporters of religions appropriate to their electorate, or at least to appease religious sentiment, or to avoid criticising or challenging their power or dogma. They are also often tied to the "religion" of growth economics with some regimes actually promoting large families for economic, religious or political reasons - all of which make essential population controls unlikely to happen from the top down, until the situation reaches crisis point, as is the case in China, or unless there is a sea-change in popular and political philosophies.

Simply getting the imperative of population-reduction into the minds of people is not going to be easy. But that has to be the starting point. In democracies, significant social action and change often occurs only after the raising of public awareness to the point where the 'new enlightenment' becomes a cause- celebre disseminated by the media, and when those in control (political, ethnic, religious and business leaders) are forced to rethink, justify and perhaps modify their actions and beliefs, in the face of changing popular sentiment.

For example, (as I have said) it has been a traditional survival strategy of some religions to evolve with the times, absorbing secular norms in order to stem a decline in their membership and/or their moral credibility, (eg. black membership and the ending of polygamy in the Mormon Church, or sex-equality in the Church of England priesthood, or yet again, as I write, I hear on the radio of Turkish moves to rewrite the alleged words of Mohammed in the Hadith that justifies misogynistic attitudes towards women), and sometimes claiming divine authority and guidance for so doing. Only when population-reduction becomes a taken-for-granted, public moral imperative will there be a likelihood of it being presented by religions as what God wanted all along.

History is full of such adjustments, sadly often wrought by violence, but also by osmosis. There is therefore reason to hope that the

population-reduction ethic could gain a groundswell of credence, sufficient to compel those in power to recognise their responsibilities, shift their dogma, promote restraint and family planning, and ensure the teaching of the moral/pragmatic basis of population-reduction in schools - before authoritarian compulsion becomes necessary. This book is a modest contribution to that process of awareness-raising.

<u>In the context of our over-populated world</u>, each additional human life comes with an environmental cost, which is potentially damaging to the lives of other existing and future humans, as well as to flora and fauna. If widely recognised and internalised by prospective parents, this could at least bring about a more responsible and restrained approach to procreation, which should result in fewer births. **Would-be parents must realise that large families cannot be morally justified, especially in circumstances where they also lead to child-poverty, malnutrition or deprivation.**

Couples who decide to conceive should also be more honest about their motives, should limit their families in order to optimise the welfare conditions of their children, and be prepared to act out a lifelong obligation to support the life which they have created.

There still remains the question of unwanted or inauspicious pregnancies and abortion. No one can reliably foresee the future, but where the possibility of a new child is concerned, prospective parents surely have an obligation to try, preferably before conception but certainly immediately after it, to consider whether the rights of the new child they will create will be met in its future life. (See the next soliloquy - "A World Fit For Children")

The "right to life" is a moral standpoint, which has inspired great acts and traditions of caring. Clearly it is fundamental to the moral code of any civilised society. But equally clearly, it has the potential, when it comes to foetuses, to make victims of those it is intended to protect, commiting them perhaps to a childhood of prolonged suffering, hardship, poverty, ill-health, being unwanted, unloved, abused, without a father or a mother, or without both. Since rights are human constructs, let us construct and adopt a new one - "**If the circumstances are not auspicious for the future child, every embryo or foetus has the right to euthanasia**."

This right cannot be positively legislated for, but it must command greater moral authority than the "right to life" for a foetus, in that it compels the parents to make decisions based upon the likely welfare of their full-term baby and increases the probability <u>that every child will be a wanted and cared-for child</u>. It follows that there would be fewer unloved and suffering children, and there should also be fewer

people in the world (with consequential benefits for those who are.)

**For this to be possible, the right of parents, especially the mother, to choose for or against abortion must be protected in law, within of course, legally-enforceable agreed limits and safeguards for both mother and foetus**.

Government legislation and controls can expedite population-reduction in a variety of other ways. They should at least be pro-active in shaping national moral perceptions, emphasising parental responsibilities to both their child and to present and future society, as well as teaching and celebrating the local/global reality of interdependence and the aim of achieving a sustainable, peaceful, abundant future.

Action would, of necessity, have to be taken at national level, with each country devising its own strategies. Once the principle is accepted it must inform political decisions. The last-resort strategies used in China should remind everyone of the consequences of complacency. Other less-drastic possibilities might include:- national targets for population numbers, with tax incentives for childless couples and small families; promotion of family planning and abortion as good moral social practice; parents to contribute (according to their means) to the cost of educating their 3rd or subsequent children. In Britain, there would also be the need to reduce immigration numbers, in order to achieve the optimum population-reduction level.

These are not essential, definitive strategies. They have too many implications for them to be cast in stone, but they simply give a flavour of the sorts of political actions which might be considered. If the moral/pragmatic imperatives are established first, the strategies for achieving them will (indeed must) follow and evolve.

Of course, the interests of every child should be underwritten by the wider society. Every child has the moral right to love, food, shelter, clothing, education, health and happiness. As well as parenting and voluntary altruism, such responsibility should be the legitimate focus of political action.

I argue elsewhere for non-party democracy, and suggest that it makes possible a non-partisan, government television channel. A government's population-reduction programme, and the ethical/moral reasons for it, could be made much more meaningful and acceptable to the general public via such a channel and other government media strategies.

I mention elsewhere how a World Government could help to reduce and control population. More immediately, if only the United Nations could adopt this aim as a fundamental reason for its existence, then it could make a tremendous difference globally. Whilst it (and

others) must obviously continue working to alleviate immediate human suffering around the world, perhaps certain kinds of additional aid and support could be offered, conditionally upon the receiving country demonstrating genuine progress in population control. The UN could, of course, assist countries with their population programmes, as well as reward them for succeeding.

**The enduring institutions of politics, economics and religion, as well as ethnic/cultural fraternities have a vested interest in pro-creation**. They all have it within their gift to transform the world, but they have been too concerned with their own self-interest and survival to take the initiative. To expedite their conversion, we need global awareness, expectations and lobbying that demand from those in power the compatability of their policies and dogma with population-reduction and control. Once again, the UN is well placed to give a lead in spreading this new enlightenment.

**Thinking globally but acting locally, it is encumbent upon the separate countries  of the world to reduce their populations. At the very least they should minimise immigration and lower their birth rates as necessary**.

# A World Fit For Children

This soliloquy is mainly concerned with children who have been, or will be born into this world. This does not imply that what happens before birth is not important. On the contrary, as I have mentioned, there is a significant link between pre and post-natal experience, in that expectations and predictions of the latter should determine the initiation and the completion, or not, of the former. However, whereas there is confusion and conflict of moral viewpoints associated with contraception, conception, abortion, foetal rights to life, etc., it is at least from the moment of birth that all humans share a common acceptance of the child's fait-a-compli existence and its continuing right to life and nurture. It is also the moment when the child becomes a separate individual, using all its senses as it interacts socially within a community.

The simple fact that all children have life imposed upon them, should morally entitle them to  nurture and protection in a world fit for that purpose. But there is  another compelling, pragmatic reason why the world should be primarily organised in the interests of children:

Do you agree with the following three statements?

(1) Children and young people become the adults of the future.

(2) The sort of adults they become is highly dependent on the way they are raised. Children are culturally conditioned. Their progress from birth to mature, responsible adulthood is impeded or enhanced by their cultural experience.

(3) Their cultural experience is largely determined by adult behaviour, particularly in the home, in school, through the media and by other significant socializing agencies.

If your answer is "Yes" to all three then you should also agree with the fourth statement:

(4) If we are to create a better future then **the direct and indirect effects of adult behaviour on children, must be the cardinal moral criteria on which the freedoms, rights and behaviour of adults are predicated**.

And if the expectations of this last statement are to be realised, then a fundamental necessity arises for a 'Universal Declaration of Children's' Rights, which will guide and constrain adult moral rationales and behaviour. It should be encumbent upon all adults, but particularly parents, prospective parents and those with the power to shape society, to act according to the moral code demanded by such a declaration. A child denied any one of its rights is a cause for sorrow. Barring accidents, adults

(individually and collectively) must be seen as responsible and held accountable.

The following declaration attempts to take into account both the needs of the individual child, as a vulnerable, immature human being, as well as its needs, which must be met, if it is to participate and contribute to a better future for everyone - including future children.

## A Universal Declaration of Children's Rights (UDCR)

Every child born into this world has the following rights:-

(1) to have been born as a result of a conception which has been solemnly planned and intended, or in the event of accidental conception, to be wanted by both natural parents, who are adult and have satisfied themselves that they can provide the means and the circumstances to ensure the probability of their child's rights being realised. (The birth of an unwanted child, or a child born into suffering, denies that child this first basic right, and therefore safe free abortion should be available to all mothers who seek it.)

(2) to be raised, cared for and protected by its natural mother and father in a loving family relationship, throughout its childhood;

(3) to be happy and healthy;

(4) to be adequately fed, clothed and sheltered by its parents;

(5) to be raised in a moral ethos (in all areas of human activity, but particularly in home, school and the media), which ensures that it acquires, naturally and habitually, a personal moral code based on responsibility and respect for the whole human family as well as the planet;

(6) to be raised in a child-safe local and global society, in which all adults share a priority commitment to the welfare of all children, and which maintains adequate laws, institutions and other means by which child-rights are upheld, particularly when the natural parents cannot or do not meet their obligations. When children's rights and adults' rights conflict, those of children should take priority;

(7) to be free from abuse, discrimination, exploitation and corruption;

(8) to be taught the skills, knowledge and attitudes that will enable it to grow into mature adulthood, achieve personal fulfilment, function effectively in a future cooperative, caring, adult world, and contribute to local, national and global human endeavour;

(9)    to be raised with an open, enquiring mind, free from indoctrination into a closed theistic or atheistic belief system;

(10)   to be taught, without bias, about the various systems of belief/non-belief, including the beneficial and harmful consequences of belief-adherence in the past and present, together with a parallel study of the sociology and psychology of religion, so that it will be better able to make its own informed choice of personal belief, as an adult;

(11)  to inherit, and be raised in a world free from unacceptable levels of man-made pollution and  environmental desecration, and rich in natural bio-diversity;

(12)  to be raised in a local environment, in which interaction with natural bio-diversity is a significant part of childhood (and adult) experience. ( A  child growing up in a vast urban sprawl is a deprived child).

This declaration is obviously a tentative one. No doubt, it should be refined and added to.  It is simply a list of moral ideals, some of which could be enshrined in law. Others can only exist in the minds of individuals and be realised through voluntary action.

I see it as being an essential, complimentary addition to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children, 1989. This latter is a most important document, primarily concerned with the obligations of national governments towards children rather than those of parents or adults in general. Inevitably it is evasive in dealing with the right of children to be free from religious indoctrination and the conflicting, prevailing assumed right of adults to do the opposite. And it says nothing about the right of future children to planned, propitious, conception by heterosexual parents. Judging by the suffering of children around the world, its effectiveness has been sadly inadequate.

 Upholding the rights of children would have to be a cardinal element in the defining and establishing of any new civilised order. They must not be simply fine words gathering dust on the shelves of national legislators and public reference libraries. A UDCR which is concise and relevant and known to individuals as well as national governments should be both a widely-used personal moral framework and an important political focus in all electoral and legislative processes.

 In Britain's legal system, social welfare institutions, governments, etc., in all actions concerning children, the best interests of the child come first. In a world fit for children, in all actions, <u>whether directly concerning children or not</u>, the interests of children would need to come first. The "child-dimension" should be a compulsory requirement in all legislation. The consequences for children of any legislation should have to be considered, debated and stated. The onus would need to be on those

whosupport a given legislative measure to prove it harmless or beneficial to children, in their growth towards a better future, rather than on those who oppose, to prove it harmful.

Adult responsibilities vis-a-vis children, particularly those outlined in the (my) UDCR, should be compulsory elements in the moral/social education curricula of schools. (Prospective) parents, whose children are at risk or denied their rights, should be helped to acquire parenting skills and be appropriately supported and monitored by the state.

These simple strategies and others would need to evolve to ensure a new enlightenment, in which governments, religions, schools, parents, authors, editors - adults generally - respond and are held accountable, and  in which the primacy of children's rights in legislation, as well as in the individual and collective consciences of people, is established. Pragmatic and ideological difficulties in achieving children's rights should not be a reason for watering them down or discounting them.

Working towards a better future through children, if taken seriously, has many implications for adult behaviour. Indeed, a significant cultural shift would be called for in many societies. The process would involve fraternities, institutions and individuals asking "What sort of a world do we want in the future?" That is the easy part. Everyone, surely will agree on the aim of universal peace, sustainability, justice, equity, happiness and health, cooperation rather than conflict, etc. etc. The hard part is then to ask "Does what I/we do or believe help or hinder the preparation and raising of children for that better future? How must I/we change in order to help and not hinder?"

As I argued in Part 1, **there can be no <u>child - centred</u> moral justification for bringing children into the world but, once they are here, there can be no greater moral purpose to human existence than their care and nurture. That purpose must infuse and constrain all human behaviour.**

# Censorship

The world is not always a very nice place to raise children. Responsible parents do their best to protect their young children from knowing too much too soon about the full gamut of human behaviour. But British children at least, are immersed in a media-influenced, permissive, self-centred adult society which doesn't share that responsibility.

In an ideal world, adults would moderate their appetite for pornography, violence, the grotesque, the criminal, avarice, self indulgence, booze and drugs etc. But such things are celebrated, promoted and rendered normal by our media. It is surely essential that any adult rights of free expression, or access to it, must not deny children's rights to **not** be exposed to these and other inappropriate or corrupting forms of expression. The law can and should enforce control measures on the various media, in order to ensure that children's rights prevail.

There has been a long tradition of censorship in Britain. Some of it has been a statutory obligation, some voluntary. Responsible parents currently find it far from effective. Once, before widespread television, videos and magazines, the cinema was the only source of mass audio-visual entertainment. Then, strict censorship and the exclusion of minors from what were judged to be inappropriate films, were more-easily achieved. The adult-only films themselves were, by modern standards, relatively modest and a lot less likely to encourage the extremes of copy-cat behaviour that occur nowadays.

 Similar controls still exist in British cinemas, but films deemed suitable for children are much more permissive and the limits on content of adult films have been extended to allow quite explicit extremes of human behaviour. Also, adult material is now constantly accessible, on T.V.,computer and video, right in the family home, as well as in magazines, newspapers and books. It is notoriously difficult for responsible parents to prevent child-access to it and irresponsible parenting is commonplace. Even so-called 'family programmes' on television (ie. before 9pm in Britain) have unexpected unsuitable content, which cannot be censored by the parent <u>after</u> the event, and (so-called) children's programmes, books etc. are often very inappropriate and resented by caring parents. Irresponsible parents, on the other hand, sometimes go further and bring into the home additional adult material, which is accessed by their children.

For the sake of children, if not for all the victims of those who feed on the extremes of free expression, there should be state-imposed censorship of all forms of <u>public</u> media.This would involve judgments on content as well as access. The power of censorship should be in the hands of officially appointed boards <u>composed mainly of parents and agencies concerned with all aspects of child welfare</u>. Representatives of the media and other vested interests, who have different, incompatible objectives, should not be eligible to serve on these boards. The terms of reference under which the boards operate, should recognise the subjectivity of the process, but should require them to base exclusions and ratings <u>solely on the possibility of material being directly or indirectly harmful to children</u>. This cannot be an exact science, but is capable of refinement in the course of time, and will at least make people more aware of the rights of children, when creating expressions for public consumption, and is certainly better than the harmful consequences of unbridled freedom. All excluded and adult-only material should be banned from television and videos etc. on sale to the public.

Those adults who cannot live without such material could still satisfy their need at special licenced centres. Adult-rated plays, films, comedy and other forms of visual entertainment, which are not passed by the boards as suitable for home viewing, could still be accessed at cinemas, theatres, clubs etc., where juveniles can be easily excluded.The rights of those, who have the need to access such material, would still be upheld. Even so, the boards should still be able to remove content which, in their judgment, <u>might incite or facilitate adult behaviour with direct or indirect harmful consequences for children</u>.

Advertising of erotic sex products, sex videos in the home, telephone and computer sex messages and conversations, sex magazines, etc., and using eroticism in the advertising or promotion of any product, should be illegal. At the very least it isn't necessary. (Yes, I know that 'mature" adults can avoid curruption, but it is the direct and indirect consequencies for children that we must put first.)

Obviously, factual information on sexual relations, gender, reproduction, contraception etc. must be easily available and part of the educational process, along with other health-related information, but there is no need for it to be produced and marketed using titillation or erotic inuendo.

Not all media expressions can be officially assessed beforehand (eg. live T.V.) so there should be a statutory code of ethics and standards, within which the media industry  should operate. Official, autonomous watchdog groups should monitor all forms of expression, deal with

complaints and have the power to impose penalties, to ban future similar material, ban repeats and bring legal action against those who breach the code. It is not sufficient to simply uphold a complaint and for the offenders to carry on as usual.

Alternatively, or perhaps complementary to this, comedians, editors, journalists, programme producers and others who create or control expressions in the mass media, should belong to professional associations, which should be required in law to formulate and publish their own codes of ethics and practice. These should clearly state how practice will ensure that the interests of children will be met and not harmed or compromised by members' activities. Membership of an association should be a mark of individual professional integrity, influencing employment and status. As such, it should be withdrawn if members transgress.

It is never going to be easy to draw up codes but the need is clearly there. For example, it would be wrong to impose a ban on the reporting of (say) the rape of a young girl, but reporting is open to a wide range of expressions. Such an incident could be covered in a simple factual statement of when and where, with a simple title " Girl Assaulted", on page six of a newspaper. Or it can be hyped-up, with banner headlines - "Sex Fiend Claims His Third Child Victim", followed by a detailed account of the criminal's vile behaviour, his strategies and his victim's ordeal. With the public's appetite whetted, the hype can continue for weeks and sell a lot of papers. Children as young as 6 years old can and do read the obvious presentation of news in newspapers brought into the home, and so do impressionable potential criminals. Both are being educated in the wrong way. It is difficult to define exactly what is acceptable/unacceptable reporting, but surely the attempt should be made.

Perhaps certain categories of news could be taken off front pages, print size limited for certain categories and the reporting of certain aspects of news banned from <u>mass</u> media. These details would still be available in official documents and reports of court proceedings etc., so no one would be denied their right of access, <u>but exposure to them would be the individual's choice and not the media's</u>.

These are just a few possible censorship strategies by which the relentless diet of sexual hype and violence, so endemic in the media of liberal, capitalist societies, can be moderated in the interests of child welfare. All sorts of other ways of making a society fit for children, are possible. It just needs sufficient will on the part of those with the power to influence and legislate.

I realise that all of this will be rendered useless if the very real power of the worldwide internet to corrupt and subvert the best intentions of societies, is allowed to go unchecked. Hopefully technology, which made it possible, will also provide an effective means of censoring it. I suggest elsewhere that a world government agency might be necessary to underwrite and monitor this major task.

There is another sort of censorship, which might help to control the abuse of the media by religions for imperialist or revenue purposes. The remit of all TV and radio channels should include the freedom to promote national and global fellowship across fraternal divides. However, for most of them, it should also include an obligation to not be used as a platform for promoting the interests of exclusive religions or cults.

Of course, the religious dimension to news reporting, social commentary and documentary analysis must occur, but should be detached, empirical and balanced. But religions (and other organisations which seek to control minds in their own interest) should not be protected from criticism or satire or what they might see as heresy or blasphemy.

Religions should not have the right to set up their own exclusive TV or radio stations with a view to raising income or recruiting members. However, one could argue a case for a single channel, with a menu of acts of worship and religious propaganda by any / all religious groups. Its remit would emphasise a balance of air-time between faiths, as well as Humanists and freethinking groups, whatever their wealth or size.

Having stressed the importance of selective censorship, it is important to also stress that the media are a crucial part of the democratic process. They are a vehicle for open debate, creative thought, dissent, scrutiny and criticism. As such, they can keep the power elite on its toes, expose corruption, inefficiency and inequity, and involve the people in the construction of a better future society. Indeed **the cardinal purpose of all forms of media should be to help to bring about a harmonious national and global world. For this they need to exercise responsible freedom of expression. The censorship I have proposed is intended to set some parameters and ensure that responsibility is exercised. It does not deny that freedom.**

# Secular Church - Global Fellowship

How can the human race overcome the widespread conflict and suffering arising from exclusive fraternal division?

This problem has bedevilled our species through the ages. Conflicts in Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Afghanistan, South Africa, Northern Ireland, East Timor, Sri Lanka, Iraq are just a few recent examples of how membership of the same human family and shared common interest are rendered irrelevant and hidden by the dominant driving force of religious/ethnic tribalism. Variations of this adversarial phenomenon are repeated in small and large-scale conflicts around the world.

Fraternities won't go away, nor should they necessarily, but a way has to be found to break the internecine mould of human relationships and establish a widely-held belief in commitment to the human family as an over-riding moral imperative.

**There exists then, a need for a moral framework and belief system, which will transcend the multiplicity of moral and superstitious perceptions of exclusive fraternities and will provide a shared foundation and means of achieving cooperative rather than adversarial relationships between them.**

This need could be met, in part, by the fundamental tenets of a new '**Universal Secular Church '(USC).** At first sight, this seems not only a contradiction in terms and therefore impossible, but it also seems to be advocating yet another competing, institutionalised religion, with presumably the potential for all the attendant problems of existing ones. But, for want of a better expression, these words do seem to convey what is intended by them.

Such a church would be "secular" in that its dogma and core beliefs would not be predicated on the assumed existence (or non-existence) of a deity, nor of any other supernatural power. It would be a "church" in the sense that it would be a worldwide movement of like-minded people, with a shared set of beliefs. They would come together in groups to celebrate and share in fellowship and live out the implications of their belief in their personal and corporate action, and/or turn to it for the comfort, inspiration, guidance and moral support of its message.

The USC (as with all other religions) would obviously be an evolving social construct. What follows are just a few foundation concepts and ideas on which that evolution could grow:

<u>What it would NOT be</u> : The USC would not be a branch or derivative of Christianity nor any other religion. It would not promote nor reject other religious dogma, nor any sort of god-belief or disbelief. It would not be a sect, nor exclusive, but would be truly universal in its

philosophy and action. It would not be a threat to, nor compete with other belief systems, unless those other systems are predicated on the sanctity of hate, apartheid, conquest, oppression or xenophobia.

Aims: Adherents of the USC would recognise that many people receive comfort, guidance, inspiration and moral support from their religious and other affiliations. They would also insist that everyone should be free to choose and practise their religious or non-religious life stances, in association with like-minded, consenting adults, so long as they do not hurt others by so doing. They would also recognise that, throughout history, these same fraternal associations and in particular the bigotry of religions, race, nationality, class and politics have spawned and sustained division, suspicion, inequality, injustice, violence, conflict and war. This has been because the differences between groups, rather than what they have in common, have been invoked to constrain and shape relationships between them.

**The central purpose of the USC would be nothing less than to pursue, achieve and sustain global peace and goodwill between all people, whilst at the same time accepting the diversity of personal faith/non-faith and fraternal allegience**.

Beliefs: Adherents would believe in a universal core of moral virtue, subscribed to by all people of good will, irrespective of their fraternal affiliations. By focussing its tenets upon this core, the USC would seek to draw its membership from all shades of fraternal persuasion without compromising their other differing beliefs.

What would bind the members of the USC together with each other and with the rest of humanity, irrespective of creed, race, nationality, etc., would be their shared belief in the moral imperative of **giving and receiving love**. They would hold this tenet to be **cardinal, even sacred** in its importance. From it flow many acts of virtue such as :-

| altruism | compassion | unselfishness | self-sacrifice | honesty |
|----------|------------|---------------|----------------|---------|
| caring | charity | kindness | mercy | forgiveness |
| respect | justice | equality | trust | repentance |
| empathy | tolerance | atonement | service | |

Some would hold this belief because they see it as the wish of their personal god. Others may simply be pragmatic and see it as the essential prerequisite for promoting harmony and reducing discord. But both would believe that their different motivations must not prevent their coming together in the spirit of love.

This shared belief means that Protestants would become brothers and sisters with Catholics, Moslems with Jews, atheists with theists, white with black, all within the one human family. The USC would provide common ground on which the great adversarial religions could finally be reconciled and all people would be seen simply as people, with the need to love and be loved, and upon whom, the familial responsibility of mutual care would be encumbent. Responsibility towards children and those in need would be a priority.

The meaning of "love" is subjective and believing in it as a fundamental moral ethic, cannot guarantee solutions to every moral dilemma faced by individuals and society. The USC would not be able to assert "You should do this or that with regard to (say) contraception, abortion, euthanasia or genetics", but rather "It is not always easy to make right decisions. Sometimes none of the choices available to you will have only good consequences. What you must do is search your conscience and consider your motives and the consequences of your actions on all those who will be affected by them. With love and respect for others as your conscience, you will be better able to take morally-right action. You can only do your best to live up to your principles, even though your choice of action may not satisfy other, different moral perceptions, or may be a moral compromise."

Members would also believe that human involvement with the natural world should be guided by wonder, reverence and respect. Again there would be a diversity of motivational reasons, but more important than those differences would be the shared belief in living close to nature and a commitment to preserving and protecting habitats and the right of all living things to co-exist and thrive in their natural setting, alongside humans, on Planet Earth. For some, involvement with nature would be a source of spirituality, (with or without a divine element), as well as a moral obligation.

Modus Operandi : Whilst there should be no compromise on its core beliefs and aims, the USC would need to be flexible, diverse and evolving in the way this core is translated into action. If this were not the case, then it would degenerate into a closed fraternity. By being open, it will welcome and encourage the widely-varied creative ways of expressing, giving and celebrating love, and prevent the exclusive straitjacket of prescribed conformity.

Gatherings :    One vehicle for this variety of action would be that of gathering together in groups. Face-to-face interaction and collective activity are necessary if genuine trans-religious and trans-cultural unity are to be achieved. It is partly through gatherings that many

people will fulfil and reinforce their motivation and renew their sense of membership of the global family.

There is every reason for gatherings to draw on the well-tried strategies, which have been adopted and adapted by religions. Singing, music, poetry, sermons, contemplative thought, ceremony and symbols are all forms of human expression, which can be used for both religious and secular, and for good and bad purposes. Many Humanist wedding, funeral and naming ceremonies are good secular examples.

The strategy of prayer might be claimed by religions as their own, but the psychological process of praying can be effective with secular as well as non-secular concepts, words and thought. (See 'School Assemblies' in the next soliloquy).

Families might find regular participation in USC gatherings particularly welcome. Parents, certainly in Britain, struggle to raise their children in a permissive  adult-orientated  society, in which powerful, inappropriate and harmful messages influence children's perceptions, attitudes and behaviour. They look around for an on-going bedrock antidote, which will help to instill "goodness" into their children and provide regular support for the family ethic. Parents already committed, may perceive that bedrock to be their own particular religion. But the USC would provide an additional opportunity for their children to experience fellowship with families of different persuasions.

Other open-minded parents find a variety of competing religions offering their own, closed-order exclusive routes to goodness, which are beset with all manner of alleged supernatural, divine creditation and superstitious caveats. Acquisition of the desired attributes is conditional upon parents conforming, or at least allowing their children to be indoctrinated into conformity and dependency on  a particular supernatural, superstitious perceptual framework and perhaps ritual ceremony. At the very least such parents feel uncomfortable with it.

Yet other parents (and adults generally) are uncomfortable with the realisation that their exclusive membership of religious and non-religious groups is socially divisive.

USC gatherings are perhaps the only acceptable means by which all parents, both those alienated from and those committed to established religions, might find the formative ethos they seek for their families. (I discuss elsewhere how formal education too can offer a universally acceptable, appropriate moral education to children, and yet avoid socially-divisive religious discrimination and sectarian bias - both of which, sadly, are legally upheld in British schools).

At USC gatherings and hopefully in members' homes as well, children could experience and acquire a moral code, which is innocent of unreasonable prejudice and intolerance, and strong in unselfishness and responsibility. Such attributes are fundamental to all levels of cooperative, harmonious, equitable human relationships and are crucial to a rising generation whose destiny it will be to reap the legacy of massive global problems and to struggle to solve them.

<u>Charitable Action</u> : There are many examples of love and dedicated service to others by individuals and charitable organisations, many of which are given prominence through marketing strategies and the media. Sometimes those acts of love are not unconditional, for example when they are directed at fellow members of an exclusive fraternity - like (say) some Jewish-only charities, or Mormon internal benevolence. Such charitable actions are also a means of ensuring allegience to the fraternity.

Sometimes the acts of love are directed deliberately at potential recruits to a religious fraternity. Various evangelical, missionary strategies have been notorious examples of this practice around the world. One hand feeds, while the other pulls.

Sometimes they are used to simultaneously promote the image and influence of (say) Christianity or some other sectarian interest. No one can deny the wonderful, essential work done by Christian Aid, for example, but why is it so-called? Atheists and Humanists and others also dedicate their lives to serving others but without promoting atheism or any particular belief system.

Does Christain Aid solicit donations from non-Christians, or allow them to work with/for them? If not, then they are putting sectarian aims before humanitarian need. If they do, then they are wrong to attach the exclusive "Christian" label to their actions. One must assume that by so doing, they intend to use the act of charity as a sectarian marketing strategy. If it were called (say) "Human Aid", Christians could still give and work for the same ideals, alongside others of different faiths and none.

There have also been exposes of the immoral use of money donated to some religious charities, in which some of the money has gone towards "the work of the Church", building citadels or convents, "spreading the good news", sectarian recruitment, buying real estate, accumulating wealth, or even supplying weapons for "legitimate armed struggles", rather than (say) sheltering the homeless in Britain, feeding the hungry in Africa or maximising the resources for healing the sick in India.

Surely, love should be given humbly and unconditionally. Reference to  the religious, political or ethnic status of the giver or

receiver, and self or religious advantage or agrandisement, should be anathema to the giver.

At its best, this latter sort of caring could be a manifestation of the cardinal USC vision of an over-riding personal identity with, and responsibility for, the global human family. This vision, and perhaps the USC itself, could be powerful forces, concentrating and combining disparate fraternities in a shared, non-sectarian philanthropic movement.

At the very least religions should not receive tax-reducing charitable status for promoting their particular brand of superstition.

Membership : There would be different kinds of membership. Formal members would consciously identify with the USC, openly declare their commitment to it, attend gatherings with like-minded others and try to live their lives according to its tenets.

There would be other people of good will, whose life-stance is inspired by the USC and who support its existence and purpose, but do not formally belong or attend gatherings. They would nevertheless be participating in the USC process.

Members would also have a sense of a wider fraternal association with the whole living and future human race. By definition, the fulfilment of the USC vision can only be realised through involvement with the real world of human interaction and not through conditional sectarian exclusion. All people, be they presidents or paupers, criminals or paragons, religious zealots or atheists, have an inter-dependent relationship with each other and are the milieu in which the ascendancy of love must prevail. And so members' sense of fraternity would be not just with kindred USC believers but with everyone.

Other Universalist Models : The idea of a universal religion is not new. Indeed most religions seem to offer global conversion to their faith, as a panacea for the world's problems.  The Bahai religion is a comparatively modern example, offering a way to shared universal love under one god. It has the obligatory martyrs, prophets, revelations and messengers from God. And so, like the others, it falls into the exclusive, divisive trap, and seen by some competitors as heretical and by Humanists and atheists as yet another religion claiming erroneous supernatural creditation.

A worthwhile universalist exercise is that of inter-faith dialogue. After 2000 years of belligerent Christianity, and faced with a perceived threat of growing secularism, some Christians, in Britain at least, have finally got around to the idea that it would be the decent thing to extend a hand to their Jewish, Hindu or Muslim brothers and sisters. One might be forgiven for asking what it is about Christianity that made them take so

long. The same could be said about all the other religions which participate in this very essential dialogue. Some, of course, do not participate, on the grounds that they alone are the custodians of the true faith and to give tacit parity to competitors is a negation of that perceived fact - an argument that is entirely rational from their perspective. Others recognise that the doctrines of the different faiths are mutually blasphemous or heretical, thereby rendering friendship impossible, unless the friendship is a cover for proselytizing. Yet others resist the inclusion of non-theists and Humanists in this dialogue.

However, at least multi-faith groups are coming together to try to understand one another and work towards peaceful co-existence. Such groups must discuss and argue if they are to succeed, but there must come a time when the discussion leads to a new situation. Talk, like soliloquy, is futile unless it leads to change or action. Some of these groups have foundered, as uncomfortable differences have led to pragmatic separation.

On the other hand, some have managed to break down prejudice and establish cross-religious friendships. **It is important to recognise that different religious beliefs are an impediment to such friendships**. They can only occur when religious differences, which are a cause of separation, are put to one side, and not allowed to impede. The friendship and the good actions which follow are more important. Successful inter-faith dialogue discovers what many individuals in muli-cultural societies have practised despite exclusive fraternal pressures - that true friendship and love are not just colour-blind and race-blind but also religion-blind.

That is why groups which are created for the <u>exclusive</u> social interaction of (say) Christians, or Asians, or blacks, or whites, or Muslims, or Irish Catholics, etc., are narrow in their vision, divisive and limit the potential for the web of love to spread.

One universalist premise of the USC would be that worldwide love and harmony can only exist by reason of the myriad of individuals engaging in real, face-to-face relationships, in which personal religious (and other) differences are ignored, or at least perceived as irrelevant to those relationships. Therefore, the USC would attempt <u>not</u> to emphasise or celebrate the personal theistic faith of individuals, nor the claims, sacred texts, beliefs or symbols of particular faiths, but rather to bring out and propagate the shared imperative of universal love, in its own non-sectarian ways.

<u>Some Effects of the USC</u> : Initially, the USC might be insignificant, with a minority of visionary members of various religions coming together to promote its potential and explore its implications. (Fig.1)

In the course of time, the USC might grow and the exclusive religions will be compelled to respond to its message and influence. They will be hard-pressed to ignore it or argue against it. Indeed, they may need very little persuasion to embrace the opportunity that the USC presents, to achieve cross-religious contacts without compromising their individual dogmas or threatening their separate identities. Hopefully a stage will be reached when each of the religions will recognise and welcome the USC as a matter of policy. (Fig.2)

The neutrality and positive love-ethic of the USC might even make it possible for chapels, churches, temples, mosques etc. to be used for its gatherings. Certainly in Britain, new life could be breathed into thousands of redundant and under-used churches. Benevolent gods would surely take pleasure in seeing their places of worship used for such a purpose.

The feedback effect of dual membership on the exclusive religions might be that they reassess their beliefs and actions, will question the barriers which segregate them from others and be more likely to pursue an inter-faith / non-faith, ecumenical search for truth, as their shared sense of bonding within the USC grows.(Fig.3)

Perhaps, in the long-term, they will arrive at a point where boundaries become blurred and overlap as the self-perpetuating imperialist forces within institutionalised religions give way to more-important genuine, inter-personal, interfaith/non-faith fellowships. (Fig.4) Differences will still exist, reflecting the tremendous dynamics and variety of human cultural experience, but the negative, harmful effects of the "Them and Us" syndrome, will be reduced by an over-riding identity with the pervasive "We" of the USC - ie. the human family.

With their self - identity rooted in the USC and a global "We", people will also be better placed to perceive their personal theistic faith as but one of a great many competing, contrasting belief systems. With this healthy detached perspective, marketing their particular religion's claims to exclusive, divinely-appointed truth and universalism as the proper context for love, will be less creditable than the practise of love between all people, irrespective of  personal theist faith.

Hopefully, a new perspective will happen, in which the various religions are seen as a rich, diverse range of fraternities meeting the psycho / socio / spiritual needs of a diverse adult population, based on personal choice. This would be quite a fundamental  progressive change, in that religions would give up the arrogance of evangelizing and indoctrination - the hard-sell approach -  and humbly set out their stall.
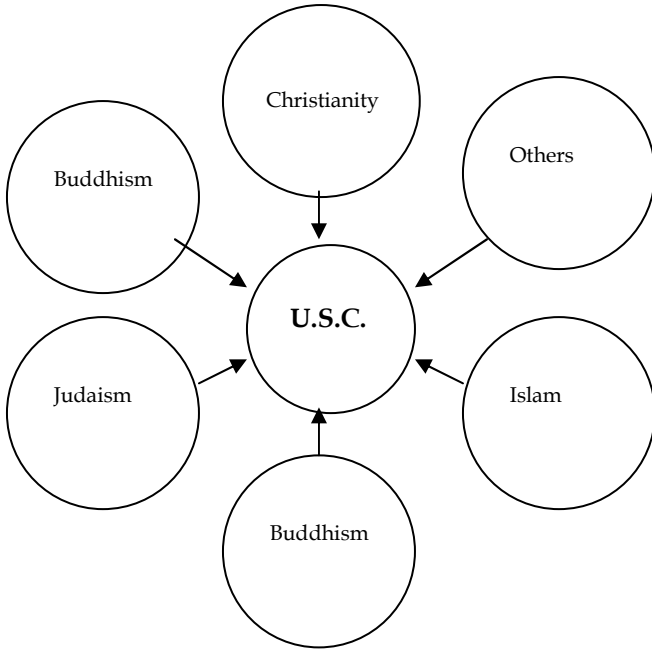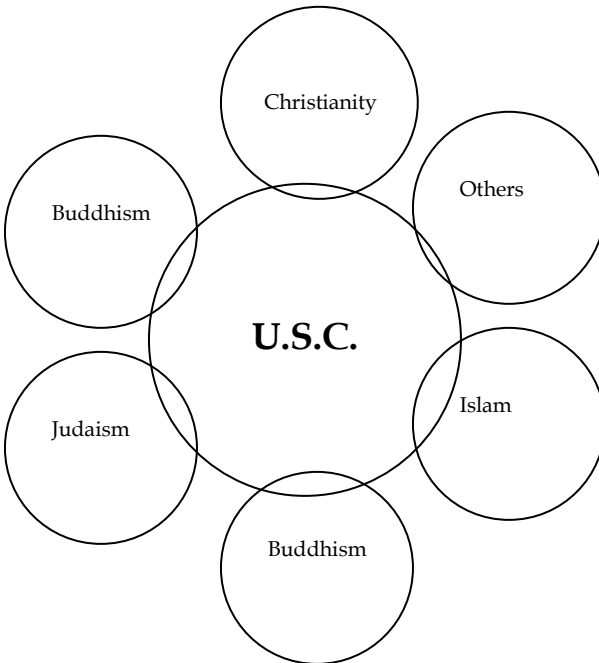
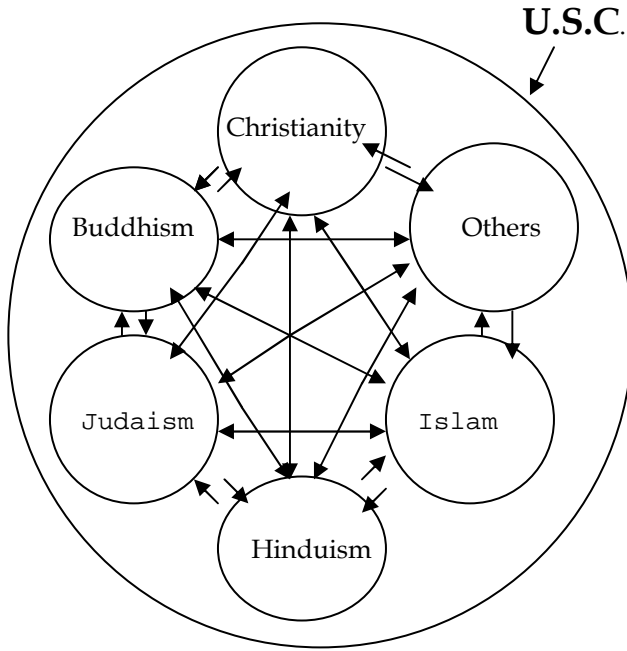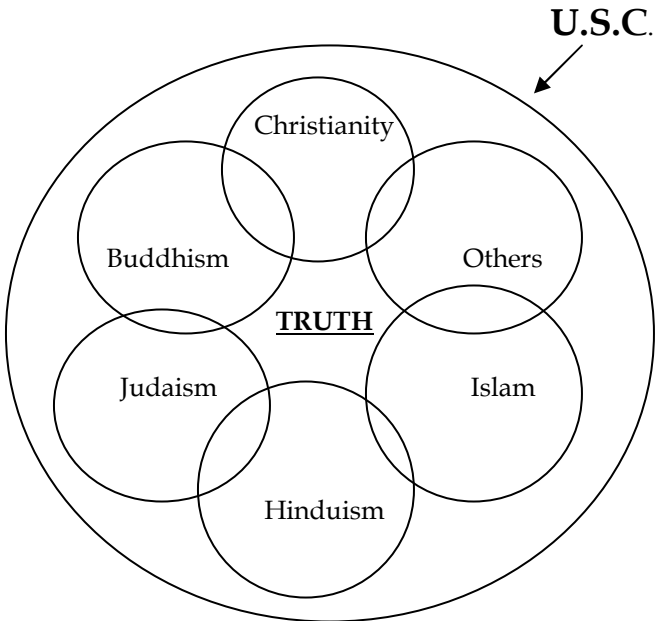Fig. 1.



Fig. 2.

Fig. 3



Fig. 4.

and say to the world "We are here. This is what we are and what we stand for. Come and join us if you like." The emphasis would be on consenting adults coming together out of choice. Marketing,  in order to further the power and influence of the faith, to recruit and convert would be seen as morally suspect

It may take a great many generations but in this new enlightenment, it would be appropriate for children to grow up not as Catholics, Mormons, Jews, Moslems or whatever, but as Children of the World, indoctrinated into the love ethic of the USC, educated without bias, in the full diversity of human belief systems and prepared for the life-long adult task of searching for truth and working out for themselves their own personal theistic or non-theistic life-stance.

As I have said, it would also be appropriate to end the "advancement of religion" as a criterion for an organisation to receive charitable status. It should not be the business of the state to sustain social division by helping exclusive religious fraternities to acquire wealth or power, or to spread their particular superstitions. It should also be transparently clear that donations made in good faith for specific humanitarian purposes are not surreptitiously diverted to sustain or promote the religion itself. Churches, as with any institution, should only enjoy tax benefits on its non-sectarian philanthropic expenditure.

On the other hand, the advancement of an open, all-embracing, one-world fraternity would be a legitimate criterion for charitable status in the new order. The USC would therefore qualify.

In multi-faith societies, of which Britain is one, where anti-social and criminal behaviour are on-going, festering problems, religious leaders often presume to speak out and offer a lead. The responses to such calls tend to be fragmented, variable and often seen as biased or irrelevant by people of a different religious persuasion. The non-sectarian, universalist ethics of a time-served, mature USC  would make it a credible, single voice, speaking on behalf of all people, and thus a more effective source of national  moral leadership.

In Britain, the running sore of a single, exclusive established Church of England, linked with the state political machine, must be resolved. The USC could be a popular, neutral alternative, with wide, multi-faith support and serving as a more  appropriate moral conscience influencing the affairs of state. But exclusive institutional theistic religions should have no political privilege or representation in government in any country.

Potentially, the USC could achieve a more peaceful world than thousands of mutually - exclusive competing religions ever could.

# Compulsory Secular Education
# Meeting the needs of Children and Society

Compulsory education is given to most children around the world. As I argued in Part 1, there are many ways in which people are divided. **Of all the agencies which shape the moral/social development of children today, compulsory education is perhaps the only one that offers the opportunity to ensure that <u>all</u> children acquire a sense of belonging and commitment to a universal fellowship of all people of whatever faith, non-faith, race, culture or class**.

School experience must surely be compatible with this objective, and prepare children for a future life in the global village, as well as their local and national societies. This will need to be reflected in the ways that education is organised within states and can best be achieved by state-funded neutral <u>secular</u> education, which should be compulsory for all children.

Sectarian and private fee-paying schools are, by definition, discriminatory, divisive agencies. They are not compatible with an essential egalitarian ethic and should not be used for compulsory education or receive funding from the state. If, regretably, sectarian or other social groups still seek to influence and recruit the minds of children in exclusive institutions, then they would have to operate in the evenings and weekends, after children had received their compulsory universalist schooling. They should receive no state-funding and enjoy no registered, charitable tax-friendly status.

It should be an important matter in boarding schools' admissions policy, that unless there is good reason for boarding, ie. in the best overall interests of the child, the best place for a wanted child is at home with loving parents. This, of course, need not apply to older local and foreign students on exchange schemes between states. Such arrangements are both appropriate for young adults spreading their wings, and entirely compatible with universalist objectives.

The planned and opportunistic use of state-funded schools and colleges as platforms for promoting particular religions and theism, as is legally required and permitted in Britain, must stop. Rules of governance for schools must insist that governors and teachers maintain religious neutrality in curriculum content, teaching methods, staff appointments and pupil-intake policy. The appointment as school governors of representatives of particular religions would be quite inappropriate and would conflict with universalist educational philosophy. The one exception might be USC representation, since it would represent the

moral consensus of <u>all</u> religious/non-religious life-stances. There should, of course, be no bar to members of any particular belief system, providing they act, as governors or teachers, in a secular and religiously-neutral way. Indeed, dedicated unconditional service to others and the promotion of universal virtue, should be entirely compatible with the ethics of their beliefs, and there is good reason why institutional religions also should see schools as legitimate outlets for their charitable, philanthropic work, without the quid pro quo of evangelising or proselytizing.

The ethics of R.E.teachers must impose on them a professional obligation to be neutral and not to use their privileged position to indoctrinate nor proselytize nor to predicate their utterances on the assumed existence/non-existence of a god or other supernatural phenomenon. Their educational objective must be not to win souls but to open minds, encourage knowledge and reason, and prepare their pupils for making informed choices concerning theistic and non-theistic life-stances when they are adults. Agnostics would probably make better R.E. teachers than (say) Evangelical Christians.

Religious Education must be compulsory and consist of a wide-ranging study of the beliefs, claims, practice, history, sociology and psychology of religions and humanism, including the good, the bad and the ugly. For instance, the part played by the Christian church in the trans-Atlantic slave trade should be taught as well as their contribution to its eventual abolition. R.E. should not be seen as synonymous with Moral Education.

Compulsory state schools should deliver universalist moral education to its pupils. This should be a subject in its own right, but would also have a cross-curricular dimension, which takes advantage of the opportunities which are often to be found in other subjects like History, R.E., English etc., and in school assemblies. (See below for a closer look at some aspects of Moral Education.)

As a general principle, all compulsory education should take place in all-ability schools. The socially-divisive, elitist practice of selecting pupils for a given school on grounds of high ability, as is the case in many British schools, has no place in universalist, equitable societies. For similar reasons, pupil admissions policies based on religious affiliation should be illegal.

In time, with the help of advanced communications technology, it may be possible for all pupils to learn/be taught certain essential skills and knowledge as individuals, each according to his ability and needs. Until then, we have to rely a great deal upon the traditional strategy of a group of pupils meeting together in a room, to pursue a common

syllabus, under the tutelage of a teacher. Somehow, what happens in the classroom must take account of pupils' different abilities. To put them into ability "streams", in which they stay for all subjects, is simply replicating the success and failure labels, which comprehensive (all - ability) schools are intended to avoid.

The "setting" of secondary pupils into learning ability groups for certain critical subjects doesn't eliminate elitism but it is preferable, and it is a well proven, equitable way to match teaching strategy to pupil ability and to maximise individual learning. In this system, a child might be in the advanced ability group for (say) Maths and in the 3rd. ability group for (say) Chemistry. For some subjects, he/she would be taught more appropriately in mixed ability groups.

I have suggested that the losers in society can be agents in their own poverty or failure, in so far as they sometimes lack the 'abilities' necessary to organise their lives effectively. Compulsory education is the only means by which society tries to correct this cause and effect in future generations. And so its purpose should obviously be to give all children the knowledge, skills and attitudes that they will need to deal with the demands and complexities of adult life.

Given the limited time available to schools, compulsory education should prioritise knowledge-learning according to its relevance and usefulness to adults-in-the-making, and pupils should be encouraged to see the open pursuit of knowledge as a life-long ethical obligation as well as a means of continuing personal renewal.

Imparting appropriate prescribed knowledge to children, for them to absorb, remember and regurgitate in exams is very important, although much of it may be quickly forgotten and may never be used again. Knowledge is also infinite and mostly cannot be accessed, acquired or used without the necessary skills. Without the skills, so much adult time, effort and potential is lost. Schools must therefore accept their absolute responsibility for maximising every pupil's repertoire of mental, physical, organisational and social skills, the most important being language skills, ie. reading, writing, listening and speaking. **If a child has the latent ability but finishes compulsory education unable to speak, read or write effectively, then the schools have failed that child**.

Certainly in primary schools at least, the curriculum, most lessons and pupil assessment should be skills-based rather than subject based. A primary school report to parents has traditionally reflected the school's approach to the curriculum by indicating a pupil's aptitude or grade in subjects such as History, Geography, English etc. It would be better if reports emphasized a pupil's aptitude and progress in the prescribed

skills which are taught, practiced and assessed in school. (See Appendix for an extended list of such skills)

High academic attainment is easier for those with high innate intelligence, and sporting "success" is very dependent on innate physical attributes. For both these attributes to be celebrated, acclaimed and rewarded publicly in school assemblies or prize - giving ceremonies is elitist, divisive and conveys the notion of failure in the minds of others. Rather, all pupils should receive regular individual appraisal and support, which includes sincere quiet praise and appreciation when they have demonstrated positive effort, attitude and behaviour, ie. for doing 'their "best. Where appropriate, these latter sorts of attribute might occasionally be mentioned with sincerity in classroom or school assembly, in order to reinforce the moral philosophy of the school, and to build the self-esteem of an individual pupil.

Pupils' attitudes-development must not be seen as the exclusive responsibility of schools. It cannot be. But schools must be expected to make a significant contribution, by using their unique melting-pot potential to nurture universalist  moral perceptions in all pupils. Rationales and strategies for achieving this must be clearly expressed in school policies for Moral Education.

Moral Education: The moral education of children is a complex process. From the moment a baby begins to interact with its mother, it is receiving and being conditioned by hidden, and sometimes stated, moral messages and assumptions.

This home, pre-school experience is crucial. The receiving of love during this period is highly correlated to the subsequent ability to give love. If the home moral ethos is sound then children have a better chance of withstanding adverse social influence and of growing into mature, discerning, caring adults.

As a child grows and develops, so it receives moral messages from an increasing range of sources - parents, siblings, relatives, neighbours, peers, television, radio, books, comics, computer games, schools, priests etc. If they all share the same moral framework, then children would perhaps be more likely to assimilate and share it too.

 Unfortunately, in many societies, particularly where adult, media, commercial and fraternal freedoms are sacrosanct, children are exposed to competing, variable moral influences, many of which are corrupting and inappropriate.

Schools then, cannot be a panacea, but because they uniquely have a captive audience of all children, they must try to impart to them

such moral perceptions and attitudes as are shared by all people of goodwill. The tenets of the USC, proposed in the previous chapter, would provide a worldwide unifying framework for this obligation.

At its simplest, **Moral Education in schools should be concerned with pupils acquiring as their own, not just these moral imperatives, but also open, enquiring reason, devoid of prejudice and superstition, so that they are better able to address the multiplicity of moral issues which are endemic in complex, changeable societies**.

Crucial to this process will be the hidden assumptions, messages and pupil-conditioning which are present all the time within the school ethos, the staff-staff and staff-pupil relationships and interaction, patterns of reward and punishment, ceremonials and rituals etc. Equally important should be a planned, timetabled syllabus, which is compulsory for all ages. The content of such a syllabus would be wide-ranging and flexible to accommodate a changing world. Space does not permit me to go into extensive, detailed proposals, but I want to focus on one or two areas, in order to illustrate how new-order morality might affect both the hidden and overt moral agendas of schools.

<u>School Assemblies</u>: In Britain, this daily event has traditionally been used partly for administrative purposes (giving out notices etc.) and for instilling a corporate school identity in pupils. But its main raison-d'etre and legal obligation has been for Christian indoctrination of pupils and acts of theistic worship (similarly in Jewish or Muslim schools). In the new order, which I advocate, this would be obviously unethical. However, it would be unfortunate if the baby was thrown out with the bath water. The potential of secular assemblies for moving and shaping the moral perceptions of children is too valuable to ignore.

A new-order assembly would still be indoctrination as far as young children are concerned. Young children need to be indoctrinated into appropriate moral perceptions. Hopefully, as they get older, their school experience will help them towards a more reasoned, autonomous choice of morality. The important point is that secular assemblies should not be divisive or sectarian and should be seen as legitimate by <u>all</u> parents. They should celebrate and promote unity rather than differences. The Jehovah's Witnesses and other dissenters should come in from the cold and share with their friends in a corporate act of contemplation and celebration of human fellowship.

**Good assemblies, perhaps using art, poetry, music, song, story or "prayer", are certainly able to move children by taking them into areas of experience and thought that extend their ability to empathise, to understand, to care, to tolerate, to cope and to reason. Their sense of**

**beauty, compassion, wonder, justice etc. can be aroused  as well as their sense of belonging to a school and global family. Corporate <u>secular</u> "prayers"  can achieve calm contemplation and introspection and a drawing together of those involved**.

 Just one example of a corporate secular prayer for a primary school assembly, might be as follows:-

Moral objective -  Pupils should learn about and reflect on the circumstances, diversity and commonalty of people throughout the world, and acquire a sense of responsibility and belonging to a shared global community.

Prayer (perhaps read aloud by a pupil) - "Hands together and eyes closed. - Today we think about children throughout the world - our brothers and sisters in distant lands. Like us, they want to play and have fun, to eat and be healthy, and go to school. Like us,  they need friends and someone who loves them and cares for them. In particular today we share our love with the children of (say) Rwanda and children everywhere, who are sick or hungry, or lonely, or without love. We also give thanks for the doctors, nurses and other grown-ups, who work for charities (like Oxfam) helping children in need. Amen."

 (NB: Some of my references to secular prayers and  assemblies are taken from  "Prayers for Humanists?", Robert Shayler, New Humanist, Vol.108 No 1, March 1993)

<u>Sex Education</u>: Children, certainly in Britain, are exposed to all manner of sexual knowledge, behaviours, perceptions and attitudes, which are manifest within their society. Many of these can be powerful conditioners and inappropriate to children's moral development. Schools can never be a panacea for such problems, but they must be required to "teach" a moral education syllabus, which at least tries to equip children with the discernment and moral priorities, which enable them to make appropriate choices. From an early age, pupils should be made aware that they will occupy a slot in the continuum of human/earth development and that they, in their turn, may not only have children of their own, but will pick up the responsibility for making the world fit for all children to live in. This should be the context which shapes the nature and purpose of sex education.

There is obvious factual information, such as anatomy, the reproduction process, disease and contraception, which schools are well able to deliver to pupils. It is in the approach to ethics, relationships and responsibilities that the clear moral guidelines of the new U.D.C.R., which I have proposed, should be taught. Teachers should obviously be sensitive towards children from broken homes (of which there are many in Britain),

but it is crucial that all children receive clear guidance on their overriding moral obligation to <u>not</u> create a human baby unless and until they can at least satisfy the first of the rights in the U.D.C.R., and are committed to the others.

A hypothetical homily from a teacher to a student ( or a parent to a son or daughter) might, briefly, include the following - "You and your partner must work out for yourselves how you relate to each other. For that relationship to be morally right, you must both exercise a caring regard for the other's welfare and feelings and be aware of the potentially harmful consequences to you and your partner of selfish and careless sex. Above all, whatever private decisions you both come to, the right of a child <u>not</u> to be conceived, except in the best of circumstances must be the essential conscience in your ear. You have been given the facts about procreation and contraception. You cannot plead ignorance. The option of abstinence is self-evident. To create new human life through carelessness or by selfish intent, without proper planning or regard for its rights, by both biological parents, is a very immoral and irresponsible thing to do."

Education is a vast subject and this soliloquy has ranged over a very small part of it. However my main contentions bear repeating, and those are **:- compulsory, state-funded schooling should not be divisive as is the case with sectarian schools;**

**the state should not fund the promotion of superstious belief systems in schools;**

**schools potentially offer the only agency in which ALL children can share in experience which is colour, creed and culturally blind; this can best be achieved if schools are secular and neutral in philosophy and ethos;**

**children have a right to an education which respects them as individuals, opens their minds to knowledge, gives them essential life skills, the ability to reason and encourages them to love and respect their fellow man (woman).**

# A New Economic Order

I have pointed out the human and environmental costs of unbridled, free-market economic growth, as well as its unsustainability and poor moral validity as a means of bringing prosperity and a good quality of life to <u>all</u> people on this over-populated planet. I must confess that finding economic solutions and alternatives is fraught with uncertainty, paradox and ambivalence.

There is, for instance, ambivalence which arises when considering the economic/social impact of new technologies. Some of them offer high-volume, low-cost production of goods and services, improve efficiency and can, in theory, improve working conditions, reduce working hours and increase leisure time for workers. On the face of it, this should be a good thing, because historically, too many people have been oppressed by a lifetime of unremitting drudgery.

On the other hand, in the free-for-all economic marketplace, it can mean that some people are employed and enjoy the high-income rewards of the new technologies, whilst others are rendered redundant, superfluous and parasitic to the wealth-generating process, with commensurate low incomes and a sense of exclusion from "the good life."

If the provision of just essentials (eg. food, clothing and shelter) would satisfy the aspirations and needs of everyone, then the best of modern technology could provide these things without the need for mass employment. Given a modicum of social planning, people could be freed from a lifetime of daily toil trying to maximise their purchasing power. Money might even be rendered unnecessary in such a world.

But I doubt that it would ever work because the educated human mind, if it is not preoccupied with basic animal survival, is incredibly disposed to create, acquire and depend on <u>non</u>-essential needs. This disposition is manifest in its creation of the vibrant economies and profligate living standards of affluent countries, the driving force of which is technological innovation and the free, widespread buying and selling of <u>non</u>-essentials. Whether it be hairdos, new carpets, hi-fi sets, new fashions, mountain bikes, Barbie dolls, nail varnish, holidays, concerts, restaurant meals, wall paper, or whatever, the flow of money between hands in exchange for millions of <u>non</u>-essential goods and services, are the dynamic and measure of economic virtue and affluence.

Besides, there is a very important justification for the consumption of non-essential goods/services, apart from the rich variety of experience, pleasure and quality of life it makes possible. Consumption

generates and sustains employment. As I see it, personal happiness and social stability are partly dependent upon individuals having and fulfilling a purpose in life, achieving their goals by their own efforts and being valued within their community. **Employment is society's only means of meeting this need for the greatest number**. Also there is little point in educating the young, to equip them with skills, knowledge, or the work ethic, or motivating children to strive as adults for the common good, if society, not least its economic system, fails to provide the opportunities for those attributes to be used and bear fruit. Modern mass-employment, of course, is technology-dependent.

There is also ambivalence arising from the impact of technology on the environment, health and quality of life. Through the cascade of cause and effect, there are both beneficial and harmful consequences. In many cases, the latter outweigh the former. Indeed, all technology comes with a whole range of hidden environmental, health and social price tags, which are not paid for by the producers or consumers alone, but by others, both in the short and long term.

There are then, conflicting imperatives associated with technology :-

(i) the economic need for businesses to improve their efficiency by embracing new technologies and reducing labour costs in order to compete **vs** the social need for businesses to maximise their workforces in order to ensure the participation, fulfilment and reward of everyone in the economic life of society;

(ii) the need to reduce the profligacy and harmful consequences of consumer materialism **vs** the need to embrace technology and to consume goods and services in order to generate the widest employment and participation in wealth-creation.

There are other conflicting imperatives, which impinge on economic activity, such as :- (a) the right of individual/fraternal freedom to compete and enjoy the benefits of success **vs** the social need to impose constraints on freedom in order to prevent or ameliorate the harmful effects of competitive failure;

(b) the need for corporate, cooperative effort for the common good **vs** the need to play the economic game according to the ruthless competitive rules, in which survival of the fittest applies;

(c) the need to recognise and encourage the virtues of self-motivation, creativity and entrepreneurial initiative **vs** the need to reduce the inequity that arises from rewarding these attributes, or their suppression if the state controls the means and rewards of production.

(d) the taken-for-granted need for economic expansion **vs** the need to reverse the relentless rape and destruction of the natural world and preserve the environment on which we all depend.

Reconciling these conflicting imperatives (and others) is probably impossible, but must be addressed. One has only to witness poverty and its attendant suffering to realise that the pursuit of affluence is a morally - legitimate aspiration. What is clear is that a shift in the moral/ethical codes, as well as the pragmatic rationales, which underpin the present system, must occur and a new balance struck if there is to be a better new order.  What is required is that it be achieved equitably and with a minimum of profligacy, waste or environmental damage. My proposals offer no certainties and no doubt would give rise to their own problems, but perhaps they will help to bring about such a shift. They are herewith submitted for readers to at least consider, discuss and perhaps reject. I simply ask that any rejection is also accompanied by  reasoned, non-rhetorical alternatives.

Once again, I cannot stress too strongly the importance of significant human population reduction. **With far fewer people, the environmental costs of economic activity could well be acceptable and sustainable.** Environmental damage would still occur, but it might be at a level low enough for nature to recover from. This single factor alone may be sufficient  to save and conserve the planet. **Also, a reduced population should result in increased per-capita benefits, as modern technology would still make it possible to maintain high levels of sustainable manufacturing and food production.**

But there would still remain the harmful <u>social</u> consequences of free-market capitalism. In theory, socialism seems to offer a hopeful alternative. In practice however, history has shown it to be far from the panacea that the rhetoric of its zealots claims it to be. Indeed, adherence to either of these two political/economic philosophies seems always to involve intractable, harmful social consequences. Pragmatically, it seems, there can never be a definitive, utopean economic system. On the other hand, it behoves us all to strive for one.

Eventually, and hopefully, the human family might evolve a global moral, equitable organisational strategy, in which all people cooperate, in peace, for the common good. In the mean time we must begin with the realities of the present, and it seems to me that **there has to be a synthesis of the dynamics of capitalism and the moral objectives of socialism**. The balance between these two great ideologies will always be shifting to accommodate the circumstances of the day, but the democratic

process should provide the feedback loop to check the actions/decisions of political executives and of economic-power elites at times of imbalance.

Reconciling capitalist free-market strategies with the egalitarian objectives of socialism should be perceived as morally imperative, as well as the main criteria (together with sustainable environmental objectives) by which economic and political policy are determined and judged. For this to happen, it will be necessary for there to be a shift in the balance of moral perception by businesses and individual workers, away from exclusive self/group-interest and towards the interests of the wider local/global community. -"One for all and all for one" has worked well in war situations. Surely the peace and welfare of all humankind justify invoking this succinct motto again. As always, the media are crucial to establishing such an ethic in the minds of people.

In such a moral ethos, everyone should have the right and the responsibility to care for his own as well as to participate in common wealth-creation, through employment. Everyone should share in the benefits, eg. income, services, health provision, etc. Everyone should receive education and training to optimise their ability to contribute to the common good.

History could show the start of the 21st. century coinciding with a significant revolutionary period in human development, made possible by new technologies, <u>providing they are used to achieve social/environmental objectives and not left to the forces of Mammon</u>.

Technology has increased our ability to understand and monitor our planetary natural resources, to exploit them more wisely and to conserve and even rehabilitate them.

Electronic control technology, the ability to create and manipulate materials, and advanced design skills, now make it possible to exploit energy/material resources in order to produce large quantities of very durable, low-maintenance products.

Communications and data-handling technology have transformed the storage and flow of information and materials, as well as coordination and efficiency in all areas of human activity.

Technology has improved our ability to maximise crop yields and to manage the land and sea. This should extend further the potential for a greater per-capita abundance of food, which would derive from a reduced population.

Technology is also harnessing the vast, perpetual, clean energy available to us in our sunlight, oceans and atmosphere. With low population (and hence reduced energy demand), it should be possible to do away with the disastrous widespread combustion of fossil fuels, and nuclear fission, once and for all.

**With low population numbers and the best of technology, in a world of vast natural abundance, in which humans are conservative, cooperative and not wasteful, no one should want for the essentials of food, shelter, energy, clothing or transport, and a peaceful, good quality of life for all, in perpetuity, should be achievable**.

But how might economic activity be shaped in the future in order to pursue this ideal? It seems to me that there are two major current strategies which need to be decided upon. One is the growing international free market, the other is the separate markets within nation-states.

What if the removal of international trade barriers and the growth of multi-national companies were allowed to continue? On the face of it, this should be a logical concomitant of a real global community. It is even possible that global economic interdependence would do more to end warfare than centuries of nationalism have done, and will encourage the establishment of a global culture and an individual sense of global identity, all of which are implicit in the notion of "the global village."

On the other hand, it might have the opposite effect. **Nation-states are significant and tenacious tribal units.** They resist and resent the loss of their identity, the intrusion of outside influence on their cultures, and the loss of control over their own economic activity.

As a relevant aside, this is why the viability of European unity has yet to be proven. The violent break-up of Yugoslavia, Irish nationalism, Basque separatism, even the gradual break-up of Great Britain into separate tribal "countries", etc., all suggest that trying to create a melting pot of the diverse languages and cultures of Europe, whilst laudable, may well prove unrealistic. The great American melting pot has by and large worked, because it was shaped from the beginning, with a common language and a common American national identity. But even there, unity is threatened because of racial and religious consciousness and the establishment of non-English-speaking cities and regions. Similarly, the integrity of Canada is challenged by secessionist demands from French-speaking Quebec.

Also, in the cut and thrust of greater international competition, with losers as well as winners, the harmful consequences to local/national communities (inequity, insecurity of employment, wasted skills, exploitation, etc.) will be even more widespread, beyond local control and will continue to give rise to national/tribal grievance. All my life, as I benefited from the rise and rise of British affluence, I have been constantly aware of the continuing poverty of Africa. Somehow the great global economic race has rendered it a tenacious loser.

There is also the vulnerability of every participating state to the economic problems of another. "When the US economy sneezes, the British economy catches a cold." Collapse in one area can drag down others. With everyone sharing the same economic road, all are locked into the same, self-perpetuating system, with juggernaut and successful enterprises pushing aside or running down the less-fortunate. Also, if the direction and destination of the route taken are fundamentally flawed, then all are at risk when the system flounders.

Also, experience has shown that the "have" nations and trans - national companies exercise power and control in the global market place, and tend to maximise their own self - interest rather than the interests of the "have not" nations.

For these reasons, it could be argued that ever-greater, unbridled economic internationalism is certainly not worthy of sacred, unquestioning acceptance.

Alternatively, we could accept as a pragmatic starting point, the intractable propensity of humans to belong to and identify with their own tribal fraternity. The world is already divided up into nation-states, most of which have deeply-embedded tribal, national identities and their own internal political/legal systems of control. What if popular wisdom called for global diversity of approach and for nation-states to promote their internal cultural homogeneity, and develop their own strong, self-sufficient economic systems with minimum dependence on international trade?

To begin with, what if each country aimed for more than self-sufficiency in clean energy, building construction materials (especially timber, stone and earth), clothing materials, food and water. This would involve not only managing these resources but also <u>managing human population numbers</u> to ensure maximum per-capita benefits.

Countries like Canada should be much better placed than most. They already have low population, massive, clean hydro-electricity potential, minerals, wood and food resources. Sadly, this beautiful countryhas polluted and damaged much of its natural environment, not least its priceless fresh water ecology and its temperate rainforests, in pursuit of short-term economic gains - and is increasing its population with blinkered zeal. Canada could lead the way in the new order. All the potential is there. If Canada cannot control Mammon, stabilise its relatively low population and achieve sustainable high quality of life in harmony with the natural environment, then we all might as well give up trying.

In over-populated Britain, the situation is different. For example, the rivers, streams, lakes and water tables are over-exploited, often

depleted and polluted. It takes only a few weeks of drought for the whole system to begin to run dry and for regional emergencies to occur. Population-reduction is essential if adequate pristine water resources are to be guaranteed for future generations, particularly if global climatic change results in less precipitation. Here too, government and people stand idly by as the population is increased by immigration, with all the implications that follow. (The situation is far worse in so many other countries.)

There is no reason at all why Britain should import (say) dairy products, meat, wheat, vegetables, apples and a lot more besides. The polluting, energy-wasting movement of certain foods into Britain, when they can be produced locally, is ludicrous, if not scandalous. To witness the grubbing out of orchards, the redundancy of good agricultural land and its burial under urban sprawl, as well as able workers made idle, whilst foreign produce is transported into Britain from across the world, is depressing in the extreme. **With low population and the best of modern agro-technology, there should be no problem with variety, quality or supply of home-grown produce, even in lean years. Indeed, with low population, the lower yields but better quality and environmental benefits of <u>organic</u> food production should also be more feasible**.

.        Obviously each country will have to juggle with different circumstances, but national self-sufficiency in food would mean that all countries would have to manage their populations, avoid being net-importers of food and aim to import only those essential foods which cannot yet be grown internally.

Again, technology can work wonders with wood. Wood could replace the ubiquitous use of plastic in many applications and thus reduce the overall release of toxins into the environment, during the production, use and disposal of that material. Trees are sustainable, recyclable, globally viable and bring with them a wide range of environmental benefits. The demands of human development have long since destroyed the vast forests that once covered Britain. **A reduction in population should make possible the reinstatement of this wonderful resource** because there would be less land needed for food production or urban/industrial/road development. Indeed, afforestation would be a useful means of reclaiming newly-redundant urban areas as the population declined.

On a wider scale, (re)afforestation of the many broken landscapes around the world would produce significant global benefits (eg. climate, air-quality, material resource, bio-diversity, leisure, etc.) within a

generation, and could also begin the essential long-term re-establishment of large-scale hardwood forests. This must surely be the very minimum legacy to be handed on to future generations.

In order to export more cheaply than international competitors and be cost-effective, countries and companies have been more than willing to pass on the environmental costs of dirty energy production, to others. Airborne and waterborne pollution have both local and global impact. There is no need to be so selfishly irresponsible. **Simply, with reduced populations, the pollution from dirty energy production/consumption is bound to be less.** But, with less energy required by fewer people, the renewable clean energy sources should become adequate. Indeed, places like Britain already have huge clean energy potential. The islands of the UK rise and fall, relative to the sea, every twelve hours, as they have done for aeons and will continue to do indefinitely into the future. Add to this the awesome off-shore wave and wind power as well as solar energy, and it is pretty obvious that Britain at least has no excuse for not adopting a totally clean energy policy.

The technology exists to make homes, factories, offices etc. virtually self-sufficient in clean energy. Given the political will, building regulations could transform the construction of buildings to achieve this.

British tax-payers spend billions of pounds on war machines, which contribute nothing to the quality of life in Britain. There is no reason at all why they shouldn't also finance clean energy. Indeed**, in a new order driven by a global, cooperative morality, it should become possible to redirect the huge effort, finance,research and resources which have been lavished on preparations for war, into much-needed humanitarian  and environmental causes.** Imagine the potential for good of such a shift in state-sponsored enterprise.

But what of those countries which (say) are largely desert, with potential for sustaining just a small population? The same principles would apply. Their population numbers should be reduced appropriately, so that there is abundant per-capita energy, water, raw materials and homegrown food. It would be short-sighted and irresponsible to become dependent on  imported essentials to support a growing or over-large population. **World stability and equity rests partly on the willingness and responsibility of independent countries to stand on their own two feet and feed, clothe and shelter their own**.

One day in the future, world society may be sufficiently advanced to contemplate making the resources of the world the common inheritance of all. Until then, the natural resources within given territories, eg. water, land, minerals, etc.,  should be owned, conserved and controlled by the State for the good of the whole nation and future

generations. Private ownership of this common inheritance cannot be compatible with an enlightened human-family philosophy.

Where these natural resources are to be used for food or energy production, then the State could offer private franchises to (say) manage the land or extract/use fossil fuels, or nationalise the production process, but would always impose appropriate constraints and controls in order to meet their wider responsibilities.

Whilst individuals and groups should not own land, they could own buildings and have rights of tenure, subject also to appropriate constraints in the wider interest. **The free-market in land and its rampant, predatory, voracious offspring (the dreaded property developers), who buy, build on and sell land for profit, should be consigned to history**. Such activity is highly immoral from both human and environmental perspectives and is certainly not necessary. Only three parties are essential to the building process - those who need a home, a factory, an office or whatever, those who build them and those who represent the interests of the wider society and exercise the power to permit/refuse and control the process. The laws of the land should reflect and protect the common heritage and ownership of land.

So much for basic essentials. But what of all the other commodities, artifacts, and non-essentials that modern humans seem to use - toothbrushes and toys, medicines and mattresses, paper and pins, books and bathsalts, etc.? The same should apply. Wherever possible, they should be produced internally using indigenous labour, to create a diverse, comprehensive internal market. Maximising national self-sufficiency in internal trade and industry should be the over-riding aim of every national government.

By way of example, instead of importing (say), television sets, they should, as far as possible, be made and distributed internally, by indigenous companies. It follows that every country would need to maintain its own pool of skilled labour to secure its television production. If this principle was applied to all products and services, it can be seen that it would be necessary for each country to maintain a wide diversity of skills and occupations. External, foreign ownership or control of companies, plant, equipment and retail networks would obviously be subject to a conflict of interest, and would therefore be inappropriate.

For a country to move towards and maintain greater self-sufficiency, it might be necessary to offer tax incentives or impose various sorts of import controls in order to create opportunities for internal enterprise to become established and flourish. But whatever the strategies used, each country would need to import fewer ready-to-use consumer

products, but participate in a more-open international exchange of the means of production, eg. machines, know-how, perhaps whole factories. There should be no right of access or export to another country's market, and every country should be entitled to bar or control selected imports without fear of reprisal.

Such protectionist action and massive duplication of labour is, of course, heresy to those with vested interest in the narrow profit goals of unfettered international companies and competition, but if we start from the premise that one primary purpose of business and commerce is to provide a means by which all people can participate in wealth-creation and progress, through employment, then maximising national, self-sufficient internal economies becomes both practically and morally more valid.

If all countries were to accept the principle of maximum economic self-sufficiency, it should reduce the aggressive competition to penetrate and dominate each other's markets as well as the strategy of exploiting low-paid labour in one country whilst destroying the jobs and livelihoods of workers in another.

**There should also be less need for advanced countries or companies to jealously guard their monopoly of the means of production. The transfer of technological knowledge and expertise should not disadvantage the supplier and so they could more easily become low-cost forms of international aid, with far-reaching benefits to recipient countries and speeding up their progress towards self-sufficiency and full employment**.

Indeed, pro-active measures to ensure this flow of knowledge could be the responsibility of a new World Government (See later soliloquy). Modern communications technologies would expedite the process. Perhaps, with due recognition and recompense of the inventor/creator, the World Government could legally take ownership of all patented ideas and dispense them freely to all countries, for internal, non-export use only.

With the aim of eliminating unecessary imports, individual countries would have to develop their manufacturing/commercial diversity and work out their own internal economic salvation in their own way. Some may choose to maintain a simple, low-tech, labour-intensive economy. Others may embrace control technology and evolve social/economic strategies in which people are happy, fulfilled, employed and prosperous without long hours and years of formal employment. No one system would be 'right.' Each would be shaped by local/national communities and their local circumstances.

The transition to maximum autonomy for a given country may take decades and may not be easy. For instance, it may be necessary for one country to reduce its population considerably before it is able to feed itself or match its energy consumption with its own internally-generated, clean energy. Some countries may derive mutual benefit by merging and pooling their different resources to form a new state. (But I argue elsewhere that such mergers are only likely to succeed if there is also a sharing of national/cultural/language/moral perceptions, so it would be necessary to build a new "nation", in which the previous tribal loyalties are gradually replaced by a new unifying national identity and commitment.) Conversely, some countries in which the internal tribal schisms are too deep, may choose to break up into separate nation-states.

Whatever system individual nations adopt, the world community, free from the snouts-in-the-trough morality of international competition, would be more ready to help the poorest countries help themselves, particularly through the patronage of the World Government.

Of course, international trade would not be eliminated completely, nor should it be. Tourism for example should thrive, especially with rising global peace and affluence. Economically-autonomous, sovereign states would be more likely to maintain their own tribal culture rather than become much the same, with a Macdonalds in every town from New York to Katmandhu. Cultural diversity is the lifeblood of tourism. One spin-off of tourism is that it encourages states to preserve and develop their natural assets. States will also still have to import all those goods, equipment, knowledge and services which they are not yet able to provide for themselves.

But there still remains the practical problem of achieving environmentally compatible economics and capitalist-socialist synthesis within nation states. Of course, autonomous, self-sufficient national economies might still be subject to the vicissitudes of capitalism, but they should be less catastrophic for the losers in the capitalist game than is the case in the global market place. This is because there would still be a need, within the country, for a wide range of skills and production and whole industries would not be lost to foreign competition. Also, national governments would be better placed to control economic activity in the best interests of all their citizens.

Politicians, motivated by socialist aims, should manage the economic process for socialist moral purposes. That is what they, and it, are there for. Vested economic interests should have a minority representation in government, and national constitutions should specify the socialist and environmental criteria by which political action is shaped

and economic activity constrained and monitored. Government action will, of necessity, involve  control and intervention in the economic process, in order to meet these criteria, not least to ensure that production and services are driven not simply by the profit motive but in order to meet genuine need and the common good.

Most countries already employ one tried and tested intervention strategy. Money is the means of exchange, and governments syphon off some of it, through taxation, at appropriate points in the exchange process in order to finance such things as community services, defence, welfare, etc. Taxation is essential to fulfilling the legitimate socialist purpose of government, through the equitable distribution of wealth.

Political parties have traditionally sought to enhance their election prospects by reducing taxes. This sends the wrong message that tax is an imposition, and reinforces the notion that employment and income are only for self-benefit . Honest politicians, along with schools, parents etc., should preach the gospel of collective responsibility, and educate people to the fact that taxes are not only re-spent in the interests of everyone, including those who are taxed, but also generate employment (and incomes and purchasing power etc.) and so help to sustain the economy on which everyone depends. Through taxation, governments can tap into consumer purchases of non-essentials in order to fund the supply of <u>essentials</u> to those in need. Workers need to recognise the privilege of employment and income, and the moral virtue of taxation, as well as their duty to participate in the generation of common-wealth.

There are so many ways in which governments can exercise the power vested in them to intervene and give a lead.. What about the following?      (i) In order to encourage businesses to employ more people, they could be taxed on their profits in proportion to the numbers of employees who generate that profit. For example, Company A, which employs two people and makes £10000 profit, pays £2000 tax. Company B, which employs twenty people and also makes £10000 profit, pays only £1000 tax. (Obviously, I'm not advocating these amounts, but simply illustrating the principle.)

(ii) Another strategy might be to impose an appropriate nation - wide maximum working week. The shorter it is, the greater the need to employ more people, thus sharing employment opportunity and also reducing the stressful anti - social consequences of excessive working hours. Of course, such restriction may well be unhelpful if a country has to compete in a global economic free-for-all, where the playing field is not level.

(iii) Those who are out of work should not simply receive state benefits, but should be paid only if they attend (and cooperate) in skills-training courses or government work schemes. There is a vast range of environmental, charitable, community and economic projects to which the resource of redundant labour could be applied. Perhaps 25 hours training or work in one week could entitle an individual to the full weekly benefit. Unwarranted lower attendance would mean lower, pro-rata entitlement. The opportunity for the unemployed to earn benefit through continued participation in the economic process should replace the perception of automatic entitlement to cash handouts, and should help to prevent the culture of parasitic dependency and malingering which bedevils many well-intentioned welfare programmes. Put another way, alongside an individual's right to work should be an obligation to work, for the common good.

(iv) National governments should also enforce high common standards, particularly where environmental and social outcomes are concerned. They could, for instance, set up independent watchdog organisations with the obligation to monitor, on behalf of all citizens, the environmental and social costs of business enterprises. They could have the resources and expertise to scrutinise products and processes, and the power to enforce conformity to the letter and spirit of prescribed socialist and environmental criteria. They could insist on changes to product design (whether it be washing machines, houses, cars, factories - whatever!) in order to prevent unnecessary planned obsolescence, environmental damage or waste, and to facilitate easy low-cost repair and maintenance by the product-user.

(v) One way in which watchdogs could influence the longevity of products might be by setting deadlines for the extension of manufacturers' product warranties where appropriate. For instance, motor cars might typically have a warranty of 2 year. Governments could require that, by a certain date, all new cars must carry a 4-year warranty. Why not, eventually, a 10-year warranty? Indeed a new philosophy could turn traditional indicators of economic progress on their heads. Instead of celebrating annual growth in car sales or whatever, as proof of healthy economic "buoyancy", the opposite should apply, so that a reduction in production, whilst maintaining per capita levels of prosperity, should be an aim and a measure of economic success. Whilst employment might be reduced by longevity of products, the cost of living will also be reduced as well as waste, energy-consumption and pollution etc.

(vi) At a stroke, governments could massively increase the capacity of new residential and commercial accommodation and at the

same time <u>reduce</u> the exploitation of green land for urban development. A simple law requiring all new buildings to have a basement and for upper floors to be of bigger area than ground floors, should increase enormously the accommodation for a given area of land. One obvious benefit would be the reduction of need for separate garages and parking lots. Another would be that a given land area could house larger families, extra tenants (eg. basement flats) or more employees, plant and equipment, without increasing the internal people-to-space density. It is ridiculous that, in Britain today, hundreds of thousands of buildings are still being built on concrete bases on greenfield sites, without exploiting the potential space below ground and in the air.

(vii) Every day the right of millions of children to inhale only clean healthy air is denied them, as they are walked and wheeled and play within metres of poison-emitting petrol engines, in towns and cities around the world. During the course of (say) 10 years, local governments could gradually exclude the petrol engine from inner-city streets. Each year a petrol-free zone could be extended. Fore-warned of the strategy, vehicle manufacturers would respond with increased research and development and supply of electric or low-pollution vehicles to meet a growing demand. National governments could expedite the process by removing all tax costs from the manufacture and/or sale of such vehicles and also taxing more heavily, high-capacity polluting vehicles. (As I write, the British government is beginning to take such action.)

(viii) While they're at it, they might as well reduce speed limits on roads. The cause-and-effect benefits of reduced pollution, energy consumption, deaths and injury, stress, wear and tear on roads and machines etc., cascade into even more benefits which all add up to an improved quality of life for everyone, not just road-users.

(ix) Under the auspices of the World Government, similar controls could be exercised over international movement of goods and people. In the competitive freedom of global trade, speed of delivery, is seen as essential. The organisation and technology of air, land and sea transport have developed to meet the demand for speed. Speed incurs seriously-damaging environmental and social costs. The WG could discourage the profligacy associated with speed, particularly that of aircraft. (The skies above the North Atlantic Ocean are a 3000-mile blanket of pollution.) Carriers could be required to purchase a licence or pay a pollution-tax, the revenue from which could be used to subsidise non-polluting transport as well as promotethe development and take-up of alternative, cleaner transport technology. **They could, for instance, create the circumstances in which (say) non-polluting, computer-controlled,**

**wind-driven, ocean vessels become commercially viable, or even compulsory for certain categories of cargo.**

(x) I am not personally worried by the "fat cat" phenomenon, in which top managers and certain professions enjoy very large incomes. They will after all, be spending or investing their wealth, and thereby generating further employment and economic activity. However, when shop-floor workers are deprived and exploited with low wages, then it must be seen as unethical. Governments can set rules which constrain wages policies. One simple strategy I have heard about is to require that the highest salary within any company should be no more than (say) five times the lowest. Another, of course, is having national maximum as well as minimum wages, which take account of the cost of living.

The list is probably endless. Any 6th form school class, in a half-hour brainstorming session could add to it. The point is that governments have the power and should have the obligation to constrain, shape and intervene in the economic process, in the interests of everyone, as well as in order to build a better, more bountiful world for those who have yet to be born.

# A New Political Order

New Nationalism - New Tribalism : A "nation" is a group of people who share a common identity and want to govern their own affairs. "Nationalism" is manifest in the aspirations, thinking and actions of such a group, as they seek to achieve, belong to, sustain or declare their "nationhood". Where there is a homogenous nation with its own sovereignty and elected government, within secure territorial boundaries, you then have a true "nation-state". In a true nation-state, the government is seen as legitimate and it rules by consent of the people, and is allowed to use a police force, on their behalf, in order to maintain order and justice. Where territory and state contain different tribal groups, then you have a recipe for conflict. You have only to compare the political map and the tribal map of Africa, or reflect on the regional stresses within the former Soviet Union to see the scope of the problem.

Closer to home, Northern Ireland provides another classic example. For umpteen sad years, it has been a state with at least two conflicting perceived national groups under its jurisdiction, one of which (ie. the republican, Catholic "community") has not accepted the legitimacy of the government or the forces of law and order. At the time of writing, there is a peace of sorts, achieved by the appeasement of murderous terrorists and a guarantee that their representatives will share top political power as of right. But the population is still manifestly divided, and unless and until all parties share the same sense of nationhood, peace will be at best tenuous. Should a majority Catholic vote bring about union with the Catholic south, dragging northern Protestants into that union, without a shared sense of nationhood, could so easily recreate the same sorts of problems in reverse.

As an aside, it is important to reiterate the head-in-the-sand culpability of the Protestant and Roman Catholic religions in this on-going Irish cancer. The two perceived national identies have been inextricably bound up with and nurtured by allegience to these two religions. If Christians simply practised the love they preach, then long ago they would have abandoned sectarian apartheid. But their priests and vicars have sat on their hands and muttered carefully-worded platitudes, or even shouted hostility, whilst their flocks strutted and shot and maimed and bombed and feared and hated. Variations of this propensity exist as running sores all around the world. I have already mentioned the culpability of Islam, and the Sunni/Shia orgy of death and destruction in Iraq. There are plenty of other examples.

Knowing the major causative factors in a sickness, it should be possible to take remedial action. Since they cannot do it for themselves, various religious leaders should be called upon to meet together in a room and stay there until they have reached agreement on truth, and strategies to bury the old emnities and put nationalist/universal brotherhood above sectarian self-assertion. Politicians and terrorists have been expected to do so in Northern Ireland, in the middle East and in South Africa, and to compromise and engage positively in the "peace process". Why are religious leaders not expected to do the same? For this to happen there would need to be a sustained, public, political and media call for it. Perhaps a thriving future Universal Secular Church would provide the perceptual shift necessary for such a call and the context for such an agreement. Until then, so long as people keep their blinkers firmly on, and embrace competing superstitions and illusions as reality, them-and-us religious tribalism won't go away, and achieving a shared nationalist identity will always be problematic.

Realistically, any future better world would probably have to accept the inevitability of diverse fraternal tribalism as a feature of human social behaviour, but at the same time would need to minimise the dangers and harm that can result from it, as well as attempt to construct an enduring universalist tribalism. A pragmatic start to dealing with this conundrum, for the purposes of global organisation and harmony, might be to establish, recognise and to guarantee, once and for all, under the auspices and protection of a World Government, the existence, and territorial integrity of autonomous political states. It would then be encumbent upon the people within those boundaries to work and act in the best interests of their nation-state.

**Since nationalism is a social construct, it is in the gift of governments to promote its virtues in the cause of national unity and self-help. The nation-state should become the <u>primary</u> (but not the only) tribal unit to which all citizens belong and contribute**.

To achieve this within a given state, there would need to be at least a shared common language and a strong sense of tribal nationalism - not the xenophobic, arrogant nationalism, which spawns intolerance, but a unity of purpose, a civic nationalism, which stresses and celebrates personal and social responsibility to the national tribe, in the context of tolerance and democracy. Such nationalism is not threatened by cultural diversity within it. Rather, it welcomes the potential of diversity to enrich, whilst at the same time transcending it and restraining its potential to divide and cause conflict. It should not be a strident, flag-waving, overt nationalist fervour, which demands blind allegience and conformity,

smothers dissent and individualism, or unilaterally asserts national selfishness before global imperatives. Rather, it should be a quiet resolve to construct a caring, viable national community, with a core of shared cultural norms, political and economic ethics, national laws and government. For it to be stable and harmonious, there would need to be a shared national moral/ ethical consensus based on social equity.

An essential first step would be compulsory, secular, state education for all, which promotes in children, open-mindedness and a belief in the <u>primary</u> virtues and responsibilities of a one-nation / one-world philosophy, (perhaps through the tenets of the new Universal Secular Church) which should embrace and unite all members of the great variety of supernatural belief systems, as well as the vast numbers of people who live their lives without such membership or belief. Allegience to organised theistic/atheistic belief systems, and to ethnic and other fraternities should become a personal adult choice of <u>secondary</u> importance, in that it should not impede the love and respect between <u>all</u> people, which are necessary for national and global peace and progress. Inter-faith / non-faith and inter-race / ethnic fellowship and action are surely higher moral ideals than those within any single sectarian or ethnic fraternity. It seems obvious that sectarian proselytizing and competing for market share are not conducive to fulfilling this higher ideal. Institutionalised religions and other ethnic/racial fraternities should not seek nor be allowed to grow into powerful economic or political institutions dedicated to the promotion and domination of their own fraternal ideology and self-interest.

An autonomous nation-state could either sink or swim. The pragmatic necessity for it to swim, to survive and prosper by its own efforts, should itself encourage the mobilisation of its human resource and social evolution towards a national unity of purpose which transcends racial, religious or ethnic identity, and in which citizens perceive themselves as inter-dependent, equal members of the same national tribal unit. It is where they have lacked this perception, that their greater loyalty has been given to lesser exclusive fraternities, which in turn has undermined the economic, political and social cohesion on which their mutual interest has depended. **A nation can call itself civilised only when marriages, procreation, housing, occupations and socialising across the religious, racial, ethnic or other fraternal divides are normal and unexceptional.**

There are states in which prescribed religion and political power are tenaciously combined. The Jewish state of Israel, Islamic states, Christian states etc. can only continue as such, by varying degrees of discrimination (or even abuse) against dissenters or minority fraternities.

As with even the relatively simple case of religious education in Britain, religions resist strongly any denudation of their power. Sadly, it may take sometime for the major religions to adjust to a more enlightened, egalitarian social order. **It is depressing to realise that the historical propensity of religions to wage imperialism, and in the process be culpable in social division, oppression, conflict and suffering, may continue for generations to come**.

There has also been nation-building by states exercising totalitarian, oppressive control over its people for non-religious ideological reasons, as has been the case in (say) North Korea. Such dinosaurs still exist, but hopefully advances in global communications and the constitutional requirements of a new World Government should expedite social change and eventual success in the battle for democracy and human rights worldwide.

I have suggested that, in order to maximise employment, nation-states should aim, as far as possible, to be economically and materially self-sufficient within their territorial boundaries, with all that this would mean in terms of responsibility for their own future. The fight against poverty and inequity, through full employment and participation in the national economic system, should be a crucial nationalist aspiration. The national ethic of self - help, would be best achieved without foreign ownership of capital, land, property or business. The vagaries of international competition should be reduced and multi-national companies consigned to history. In their place, <u>free</u> access to expertise, training, knowledge and innovation should be available to all nation-states, under the auspices of World Government. Low population numbers should be maintained in order to maximise the resulting cascade of national and global benefits.

In the context of a world composed of self-sufficient, stable, sustainable, non-competing, tribal nation-states, "nationalism" must become a high moral virtue, compatible with the idealism of "The Global Village" and the need to preserve and manage the planet. When it isn't compatible, then nationalism becomes a vice. Nationalism within each autonomous nation-state, should include pride in not just self-reliance but also the sustainable management of one's national patch on the Earth's surface, in the interests of the global fraternity.

Just as citizens should seek to construct a one-nation society and relate to each other accordingly, so too should nations seek to construct a one-world society of nations. In this, the concept of international rivalry and competition, which is predicated on the moral legitimacy of winners and losers, and leads to inequity and division, is inappropriate to say the

least. As I have said, **the new state nationalism should not seek self-agrandisement or advantage on the world stage. Nationalist sentiment would be for internal motivation and expression only**.

Even state funding and involvement in sport should be limited to facilitating the healthy participation and enjoyment of its citizens and not the promotion or sponsorship of national champions, in the spurious belief that international sporting success is a measure of national greatness and superiority vis-a-vis other nations. National flags and anthems in the award ceremonies at international events should be ended, since they work against and corrupt the greater ideal of the world's youth simply participating in a spirit of unity, openess and fun. On the other hand a new "World Anthem" and a new "World Flag" would be entirely appropriate and should be played and flown at international events. Within Britain, only the Union Flag and "God Save The Queen" should feature in internal British sporting events (eg. an England vs. Scotland rugby match), so long as the British union lasts, otherwise the new world anthem and flag would be more appropriate.

With regard to national flags and anthems themselves, they should represent and inspire the unity of <u>all</u> citizens. They should therefore be non - religious and non - racial. Taking England as an example - now that it has been isolated within the U.K., by reason of devolution and Welsh and Scottish nationalist ascendancy , it is beginning to construct its own national identity. A good start might be to change the flag of St. George, before it gets too established. Saints and Christianity are not appropriate to a multi - faith and secular society, which aspires to a shared national fellowship. Most national flags seem to be simple patterns of shape and colour. I'm sure a class of 11 - year old pupils could create an inspiring English symbol. There is no English anthem to be discarded, so the opportunity exists to wax inspirational in composing one that celebrates not conquest or superiority, but love of landscape, heritage, altruism, social equity etc.

Meanwhile, the words of the British anthem are open to challenge. If the union survives, and the Scots do not pull the plug, then the singing of a prayer to a Christian god, asking for the protection of a queen who is seen by many as an anachronism and essentially English, is hardly going to fulfil its purpose, which is to inspire Britishness in the whole, diverse population of these islands.

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<u>World Government</u>:   One cannot embrace the vision of "The Global Village" without also recognising the need for an appropriate global, legal/political structure to support it. Whether economic activity becomes evermore global, or, as I suggest, reverts to more protectionist,

separate national economies, some form of limited world government (WG) will have to be set up, if this vision is to become reality. The reasons bear repeating:-

(i) The excessive and growing world human population, global environmental damage due to human activity, global inequity, suffering and conflict, the capacity of humans to harm themselves and future generations, international crime, and now global climate change - all these and more lend urgency to the need for global cooperative effort and 'control", if the world and its people are to achieve and sustain life, peace and prosperity for all;

(ii)The historical tendency and ever-present potential of nation-states and other fraternities to ignore global imperatives in the pursuit of selfish ends, as well as the fact that human action, interaction, mobility, etc. happen on a global stage, make it necessary that everyone should be equally subject to appropriate world law.

Modern technologies, which have helped to bring about this global human activity and shrink the planet, have also made possible the global communication and organisation that a WG would require. Technology has made the start of the 21st. century an opportune time to grasp the nettle.

For over half a century, the United Nations has provided an interim controlling influence over world events. Born out of the manifest human capacity to wage terrifying global conflict, and despite its turbulent existence, antagonists have at least talked to each other in the context of global imperatives, and a great deal of good has been brought about by its resolutions. However, relying, as it does, on voluntary actions by member-states, who tend to put their own national interest first, its many wonderful achievements have been overshadowed by its inability to deal effectively with many major issues. A continuing UN is essential, as a world forum and generator of solutions to global problems, but it is also well-placed to be the midwife in the birth of a fledgling World Government, and to become a watchdog, moderating chamber to it.

Inevitably, establishing such a body would have wide-ranging, revolutionary implications and would probably take generations to evolve and mature. No-one can foresee the eventual shape of such an unprecedented organ of political control. All one can do is to take tentative pragmatic actions based upon agreed moral imperatives and simply make a start. But before then it would be necessary to make the concept and purpose of WG a high-profile issue on the world political stage as well as in the homes of all nations. A lot of thinking and talking

has to happen in all sorts of places, but the UN is probably the best organisation to be given the task of shaping consensus and overseeing the launch of WG.

Much of this mammoth brainstorming exercise would raise many questions, scenarios, fears and challenges to the established patterns of political control. It should also involve soliloquy and debate of the "What if........?, Why not.......?" kind, as the possibilities for positive action and benefits are explored. You and I, as much as presidents and politicians, have the right and duty to join in, in a creative way , perhaps thinking the unthinkable by allowing the global moral imperatives to drive our thoughts before we impose on them the constraints of pragmatism. For what they are worth, here are some of my thoughts:-

Leaving aside for the moment the Who? and the How? of WG, let us assume it will exist, and concentrate on what powers it might exercise on behalf of all the peoples of the world.

What if the WG, on behalf of the world community, owned, administered and had jurisdiction over the following "territories"?:-

(i) The oceans. The plundering and pollution of marine resources by certain profit-driven nations and companies, could be eliminated if conservation and extraction, as well as equitable global distribution of the benefits therefrom, were carried out under the auspices of the WG. There is no good moral reason why (say) Japan, Britain, Norway, or any other nation should benefit disproportionately from fishing the oceans, whilst others get nothing. Historical precedence explains the inequity, it doesn't justify it from a global moral perspective. The fishing of their own coastal waters by local communities and nations is obviously a different matter.

Under world law, pollution of the oceans, via the rivers or dumping or whatever, could be seen as a crime against humanity and nations/organisations/ individuals sanctioned accordingly.

Ocean travel could be licenced by the WG. This would enable them to control vessel propulsion systems in favour of non-polluting, environmentally-friendly wind power.

(ii) The Antarctic continent. Antarctica is the subject of international conservation agreements, but with the pressure on global resources remorselessly increasing, these are already under threat. There is yet time to take Antarctica into global ownership and thus prevent exploitation of its mineral and marine resources by a small number of privileged nations, which claim dubious historical rights to the territory. Antarctica could and should be protected from development and preserved in as natural a state as possible for future generations.

(iii) The atmosphere. If the WG established world laws on air quality, then those countries, who impose atmospheric pollution on

others, could be controlled and held accountable. The WG could also put in place the means by which clean technologies are promoted, made available and perhaps imposed world-wide. The atmosphere is a global resource and the cost of installing clean-air technology in (say) poor countries, should be borne by the world community. Voluntary international codes have been notoriously difficult to agree and fulfil.

As with the oceans, flying in the atmosphere could be controlled by licence, to reduce the terrible, unnecessary, global blanket of pollution spread by jet engines, and to encourage "cleaner" travel by land or sea instead.

(iv) Outer space. Outer space should cease to be the exclusive laboratory, playground, battlefield, waste dump of certain countries. Indeed, it might be best if all human activity in space was authorised or financed by the WG. Nation-states would no longer have the right to their own unilateral space programmes. Extra-terrestrial activity by organisations like NASA would cease, or might continue with a new philosophy, new ownership and a new name - perhaps GLOSA (Global Space Administration). It may well be that global funding and cooperation could achieve more than the unilateral space programmes of a few affluent countries.

Alternatively, the WG could ensure that the incredible planning, research, organisation and financial resources which go into extra-terrestrial activity, are redirected into projects which address the more urgent needs of mankind and the planet. So long as one child suffers and dies for want of food, a multi-million dollar probe to investigate (say) the moons of Saturn must be an obscenity.

Some more "What ifs" :-

What if the WG passed laws which sought to control forest destruction and promote reafforestation, clean/adequate water supply, etc.?

Tolerating bad environmental practices in order to reduce costs and thereby to improve the ability to compete is all too common. What if the WG set and expedited compulsory global standards of environmental protection and pollution control? Apart from the obvious environmental benefits, it would help to create a level playing field on which economic games are played.

What if, as I have mentioned earlier, patent rights for any innovatory ideas were owned only by the WG? Obviously there would need to be an adequate system of recompense to the innovator(s), to cover research and development costs as well as some profit, but the WG would exercise ownership on behalf of the rest of the world, to whom it would

distribute the new knowledge equitably and freely. Perhaps, for a period of (say) 5 years, any export trade, which uses a given patent, could be subject to WG tax, from which the originating country could be exempt. A similar system might apply to copyright on certain kinds of books and data, particularly educational and technical material.

What if research and development of medicines, genetics, vaccines and other pharmaceutical products were financed and controlled by the WG on behalf of all people? The high cost of medical research should best be met by cooperative, global resourcing. This work could be done in WG establishments or contracted out to private companies. The latter could still research and develop their own products, but the WG would compulsorily acquire the patent rights and hence control production and distribution in the interests of equitable world health and not of company profits.

Some might argue that such strategies might reduce the pace of change. Well that should not be a bad thing. Economies and cultures need time to adjust to new ideas and technology. The juggernaut of rapid change is surely not essential to human happiness. It is far better to evolve gently and equitably, consolidating the positive and discarding the negatives of innovation before they become too damaging.

What if the WG operated global responsibility for disaster and famine-relief and for aid to underdeveloped, struggling nations? A binding system of equitable taxation on countries, to finance this work, would need to be imposed. This taxation, for the purposes of aid, could be in the form of vouchers, which could only be used to purchase goods, technology, equipment, expertise and services from the donating country. This way, not only do the recipient countries benefit, but the donating countries also benefit, in that employment is created to meet those purchases and money is reintroduced into the donor economies. In the process, the money has simply been diverted temporarily to fulfil global responsibilities. Also, the proportion of donor economic activity devoted to essential needs (as opposed to non-essential trivia) has been increased. Other sources of WG revenue would obviously need to be devised.

Of course, voluntary charitable service, donations and self-sacrifice will still be needed, because statutory taxes will never meet all the complex and ever-changing needs in the world.

Whilst the nature of the aid given to those in need should obviously meet life-threatening crises quickly, it should otherwise be of a kind that helps recipient countries to become independent of outside support. They should be required to exercise their own responsibility to organise their population numbers, economies and social systems, so that

they not only achieve a good life for their people but also become net contributors to the global community.

What if the WG passed laws which set the rules for international trade? One law might prohibit the foreign ownership of property or business in all countries. Another might standardise global communications technology. I have already mentioned the potential role of WG in controlling the transport of goods and people so as to reduce environmental damage, pollution and waste. What it would not do is usurp the sovereignty of individual nation-states over their own internal economic strategies.

Given the global problem of over-population, a minimum requirement from all nations might be for them to submit for global scrutiny, national population-reduction policies, giving details of strategies, targets and performance. Denial of certain kinds of aid or taxation/trade sanctions might be applied in cases of inappropriate national population growth.

What if the WG put the new information technologies to work and established a free global education service? It would have the potential to forge universal unity of purpose and fellowship, and could revolutionise the struggle to eliminate ignorance, which is the bedfellow of inequity, poverty, fraternal conflict and suffering around the world. The WG could also coordinate and fund the dissemination, to all countries, of expertise, knowledge and training, appropriate to their individual needs.

At the same time, given the proven potential of the worldwide internet to serve evil purposes, what if the WG set up appropriate world laws and coordinated global prosecution of cyber - space offenders?

What if the WG had responsibility for the defence of any nation-state against attack by another? Given this protection, the need for national arsenals and military power should diminish, the arms trade should cease and international problems would have to be resolved by means other than invasive war. Given this blanket protection, the world should be a more peaceful place. As a first step, the WG could enforce the decommissioning and prohibition of the testing and production of weapons of mass destruction by any country. So long as certain countries have them and others do not, there will never be an acceptable moral argument which will prevent proliferation. Wider acquisition and the possibility of their irresponsible use will grow. A global ban and total decommissioning is perhaps the only way out of this particular dilemma. The world will not suddenly be all sweetness and light, but it should be a

safer place and the disproportionate investment in preparation for conflict by nation-states could be redirected into preparation for a better future.

What if the WG also had the responsibility for peace-keeping in cases of civil strife within any nation-state, as well as for tackling international crime like drugs and terrorism?

**What if the WG coordinated the processing of all asylum-seekers? Whatever country they first arrived in, they would be dealt with by a WG agency, who would put them in a global queue and allocate them, in order of arrival, to the next country on the list. This is a simple overview. There would obviously be various provisos and safeguards, eg. keeping families together, but the principle of strict-order allocation would be a basis for all-round equity**. Assimilation of newcomers in large numbers is always difficult, but this strict rota/quota approach would share the burden and impact between all the nations of the world and put an end to bogus economic migrants who are simply seeking a better life in certain affluent countries.

If asylum-seekers are genuinely escaping from danger or persecution, they would surely be grateful to and willing to integrate into their allocated host societies. It would also be encumbent upon both parties to not allow religious, ethnic, racial or language differences to be a barrier to integration. (See also  the next chapter "A New Cultural Order") There should, hopefully, be a reducing need for asylum in a new world order, particularly if the next "What if?" below, is implemented.

 What if the WG became responsible for binding legislation to ensure global compliance with UN declarations on adult and children's rights, as well as promoting worldwide responsibility for all the world's children? They would obviously need powers of intervention and enforcement in non-compliant nation-states.

What if the WG established a world-wide personal identity card and database system? Everyone would have a card, which would give only authorised officials, access to information to which they would be entitled. For instance, doctors, hospitals, benefits agencies, customs, tax inspectors,police - all might have a legitimate right to use the card to access databases in the interests of the individual and/or society. The ID card could serve as a passport, give medical conditions or history, help in the fight against international and local crime, be used as a credit card, give details of marital and parental responsibilities. As with many types of existing cards, it would need to be fraud-proof, but the technology for this is improving all the time.

What if .........? I could go on, but I think I have floated enough thoughts on the "what?" and the "why?" of world government. Now a consideration of the "who?" and the "how?"

There is obviously a danger of a WG being dominated by vested national (as opposed to global) interests, of abusing its power and not being immediately answerable to a higher authority. This, of course, is the case with national governments. In both cases, democracy is an imperfect instrument, but it is the only means by which the people at the receiving end of political action can exercise a peaceful feedback control loop to modify it. For it to work at all, the world citizen would need to feel and be part of the global political process.

I would have thought, as a minimum starting point, that national elections to choose members of the WG could be held regularly, say every four years. To provide continuity, a quarter of the participating nations, in rotation, would hold these elections each year. Proportional representation based on population numbers, as opposed to one nation - one member, are bound to be contentious alternatives, but for the limited powers intended for the WG, the latter would be preferable, not least because it would not deter nations from reducing their populations and would give no incentive to increase them. This need not preclude occasional proportional voting, pro-rata with national populations, where appropriate, within the WG itself. It could be that world government and global suffrage might be the most important means by which all individuals, of whatever nationality, begin to think globally and to share a common identity.

Meanwhile, national governments could continue to send their unelected reps to serve at the UN. This organisation could take on a new role as a second chamber of WG. It could decide what powers and responsibilities the first chamber may assume and act as watchdog, with perhaps powers to delay, question, amend or veto proposals in some prescribed areas. It could also become a world supreme court, ruling on actions brought against national governments in matters of politics, human rights, world law etc.

Governments only exist and function with the compliance of the majority of the people. In the event of the WG abusing its powers, the UN would have the power to organise global non-compliance in various ways. And of course, there would always be the correcting mechanism of regular elections.

Even so, as with all governments, the WG will require enforcement agencies, which are commensurate with its evolving powers. The UN has provided a valuable prototype model for international military resolution of local/regional conflict. As with the UN operations, to ensure credibility and to avoid national or other fraternal corruption in a WG military force, it will be necessary to recruit service men and

women from all nations. It would also be necessary to maintain an internationally-recruited police force to uphold world law in those territories over which it has jurisdiction and in matters permitted by its UN mandate.

The effectiveness of WG would be greatly helped if all its business was conducted, indeed if all nations and peoples were talking to each other, using a common universal language. Deciding which one would depend on the willingness of nations to give up their prejudices and rivalry, and to judge different languages according to their merits. English is a versatile language, well established around the world. It does seem to be a contender along with perhaps Spanish and French.

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<u>National Politics</u>:  Reverting to national politics, I have argued that the inherent adversarial nature of party politics (typically that of the U.K.), seriously impedes the process of effective government, in various ways. For instance :- party allegience often takes precedence over independent conscience and reason; inter-party conflict rather than cooperative, corporate team-work is taken for granted as the process by which democratic legislation happens; parties are subject to patronage and control by vested interests (not least those of Mammon and Religion); patronage and control renders political parties instrumental in perpetuating privilege and class/social divisions in society; large, rich parties tend to control access to political power, thus denying access to independent, free thinkers especially those without financial paymasters or personal wealth; and so on.

How else then might democratic government be organised? Clearly there have to be elections at local level to choose representatives for local and national government. It is also clear that candidates for these offices should not be denied the  freedom to associate with politically like-minded others. However, it should be a requirement of all election candidates, that they publicly make and sign an oath of integrity, which might be worded something like this:

"I, (Name), offer myself to the electorate of (Place name) as a candidate for the office of Member of Parliament. I do solemnly swear that I am, and will continue to be, independent of any control or sponsorship by any political (or other) group, both during the election process and whilst in office, should I be elected. In office, I will strive and vote

for the interests of my constituents and the nation as a whole, as well as the interests of the present and future global human family, according to my conscience, and not to satisfy the interests or expectations of any fraternity, to which I am affiliated."

In a new order, political fraternities should not be allowed to seek or exercise political power as a group, or to sponsor, or canvas on behalf of candidates. Party names, slogans, platforms and propaganda should not feature in the election process or on ballot papers. Fraternities, of course, should and would exist, but would no longer be 'parties' as such, with the right to seek and achieve political power, but rather they would exist simply as lobby groups, to provide a forum for members and with a right to inform and urge upon all electors, candidates and sitting MPs their particular viewpoint regarding the various issues of the day.

In national and local/provincial councils, power would no longer be in the hands of a majority party. In the party system, at national level, the executive or cabinet is usually determined by the majority party, resulting in the talents of many very-able politicians being wasted for years and decisions often shaped by party interest. In a non-party system, the possibility exists for an executive made up of the most-able from a variety of persuasions but with an over-riding shared unity of purpose, and for decisions to be shaped by independent, reasoned argument in the interests of all.

It follows that the election process should focus on the individual candidates. A candidate's membership of a political lobby group should of course be revealed, along with his other affiliations like religions, freemasons, businesses, Friends of the Earth, etc., but electors' final choices would be made following a statutory process, in which the various candidates are given equal opportunities to present their philosophies and policies to their electorate. Propaganda or promotion in the mass media, by lobby groups or sponsors, in support of a candidate would not be allowed.

The existence of non-party government, together with modern communications technology, would make this possible and at the same time strengthen the public involvement in the democratic process. I have in mind the establishment of state-funded/controlled local radio and television channels, which would exist for that purpose and to disseminate government information. (Adversarial party government makes such an idea highly unlikely because of the probability that those

in power would use such channels for subtle propaganda in their own party interest.) In addition to disseminating information in the public interest, governments would be required to ensure that such channels were used for well-controlled, impartial, public questioning of candidates, leading up to elections. I visualise a series of televised local public meetings in which all candidates appear together answering questions and debating a wide range of issues. Such an approach would ensure that this important part of the democratic process reaches a much wider audience than similar meetings held in draughty school halls. There should be no <u>separate</u> promotion of individual candidates, whether it be by leaflet, doorstep canvassing, public meetings or whatever. Fund-raising or spending on promotion by candidates or their supporters would be unethical and therefore banned. Wealth should not be a passport to power, neither should poverty be a bar to it. The inequity and corruption associated with the financing of political parties should be eliminated.

All candidates' responses to questions and their written policies on given issues could be reproduced <u>together</u> in an official printed form, and delivered free of charge to the electors. Naturally all candidates must be given equal coverage in each printed edition. Perhaps candidates who wish to publish unilaterally their thoughts and proposals on any particular issue could be allowed to do so, providing the text is submitted to the other candidates first, for them to add their responses and comments before distribution.

Similarly, the questionnaire technique could be used to extract from all candidates fairly <u>precise</u> responses to issues of public concern, and the results circulated as before. The public, and individual candidates, would submit the issues and the questions. For example:-

Abortion - Would you vote to preserve the right
of mothers to choose?                                    Yes  No
Would you work to bring about national
population reduction?                                    Yes  No
etc.......

Electors should also have opportunities for meeting candidates personally. This too should be done in a fair way and could be achieved by all candidates appearing at the same time in local venues, so that electors, who so wish, can consult them in turn, in face-to-face interviews.

One advantage of these various strategies would be that electors could, in their own way, focus on and make informed, sober comparisons of the candidates, issue-by-issue, without the hype, rasamataz, subterfuge, meaningless rhetoric, and inequity due to differences in campaign funding, which are so characteristic of party-political

democratic elections. Another advantage might be that it would make for compulsive viewing, listening and reading at a local level, and thus involve the electorate more deeply in the democratic process than would voting on party lines, which is notoriously influenced by party loyalty and propaganda, as opposed to individual merit.

Once elected and in government, it should be possible, with modern technology, to easily monitor and disseminate to the electorate, the voting patterns of representatives. Supermarkets and banks can instantly register all manner of data concerning transactions in food and money. There is every reason for electronic voting in seats of government, with instant public reporting at local level. The voting behaviour of their representative in government should be clearly presented to local communities, not least to compare performance with pre-election promises, and to make local criticism informed.

An independent monitoring agency should maintain an overall database profile of every representative, giving his public utterances, policies, fraternal memberships, voting record, etc., all of which should be available for public scrutiny via public and private computers.

A change to party-free elections and government would obviously involve a great many more implications and considerations than I raise here, but local/national debate would explore the concept and take it forward, if it has merit. The biggest stumbling block to such change would of course be that it would require legislative action by those who are themselves beneficiaries and prima-donnas of the party system.

Let me develop further the idea of local and national government television channels. I have said that governments have a duty to be proactive in the process of change. The most obvious way is in legislation but there are other ways. In some countries, like Britain, television coverage of parliamentary debate, although piecemeal, has gone a long way towards transparency in government. A national, non-commercial, non-entertainment, government TV channel could extend this concept further by presenting details of current bills, analysis of the issues being addressed, the moral, religious, economic, etc. arguments for and against proposals, voting patterns, face-to-face interviews with the main protagonists etc. The possibilities are wide and would need to be refined through experience in order to maximise the value to electors as participants and monitors of their own administration.

But the potential of local/national government channels is far greater. Governments have a responsibility to inform their people of the reasons and consequences of government actions. They also have a duty to give guidance and persuasion in matters of health, morality,

responsibility and a wide range of practical issues, in a way which cannot be achieved by commercial or other TV channels, which exist to compete and entertain. This need not be dictatorial but simply presented in a way that respects the citizen's right to information and reflects the underlying philosophy of one nation-one world. Indeed with the positive promotion of self-help, mutual responsibility and national tribal cohesion, internecine fraternal tensions within the state should be reduced and a more genuine integrated society achieved.

At local level I can envisage the faceless planners and bureaucrats who wield power being required to justify their actions to the local community. The names and faces of those who actually vote or decide that a bypass should be constructed or 10,000 new homes built on green land, or whatever, should be exposed to public viewing so that electors are better able to judge their record. Local council meetings and sub-committees should be televised for local viewing. Studio audience and phone-in techniques should be frequently used for the public to question all those who exercise power on our behalf - not using the depressing but popular format in which verbal exchanges about serious issues are presented as hyped-up, rabble-rousing entertainment, but by using a sober approach, in which the quality of debate is paramount. Their responses would be heard and seen first-hand by a much greater number of electors than would otherwise be the case. It is right that public servants should be seen and answerable to those whom they serve. Others like the police, education and hospitals should use the local government television channel to inform their public of policy, provision, costs, etc., and be open to public feedback.

Government TV and radio programmes could initiate and coordinate phone-in or internet surveys, elections and referenda on a wide range of issues, and for a variety of purposes. The results of local/national referenda could be binding on governments if (say) 60% of the adult population voted positively for a given proposal. If not, then the elected representatives would decide in the usual way. This would go a long way towards involving ordinary people in the decision-making process, with obvious benefits for society as a whole. One is more likely to act responsibly if one feels that one's vote and opinions really count.     I can also envisage local lobby groups, civic societies, Friends of the Earth, religions, residents associations, etc. as well as individuals being given opportunities to make their particular contribution to matters of local concern, which call for a local government response.

At national level, I can visualise informative programmes for the population as a whole, covering a wide range of subjects for which

government has a responsibility, such as income tax, social benefits, crime-prevention, defence, health, etc.

The media will always shape moral perceptions, whether intentionally or by default. This power is recognised and used by opposing sides in warfare. Why not harness it positively in the urgent campaign to change the world for the better? Through such radio and TV channels, local and national governments could nurture a greater sense of self-help, mutual responsibility and national tribal cohesion. In doing so, internecine fraternal tensions should more easily be defused and a more genuine integrated society achieved. They could also initiate real action by the public for the benefit of the community, the state or the planet. Some examples might be:-

- simply marketing the concepts of belonging to the human race, of mutual care, of environmental conservation, of responsibility towards children and future generations, etc;

-celebrating and giving positive coverage of events and actions which exemplify these ideals;

-calling for specific voluntary action in the interests of others. It could be anything from giving up smoking if you are a parent, or conserving water, to joining a task force to clear snow, reinforce a flood barrier, or plant trees. The possibilities are endless;

- helping police to solve local crimes by appeals for witnesses and information within hours of them occuring.

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Religion in Politics:  There is no reason why people who believe in fantasies, worship supernatural gods or practise exclusive religion should not become politicians or civil servants. Indeed the religious or non-religious beliefs of a candidate, should not be a requirement nor a barrier to his standing for political election. Religions should be free to campaign on political issues of their choice. But political organisations and governments should be entirely secular in the conduct of their affairs. Certainly, in Britain, the establishment of the Church of England and the representation, as of right, of <u>some</u> religious institutions in parliament, and the inclusion of religious prayers, are discriminatory and inappropriate to say the least.

The same should apply to strict Islamic societies where the dictats of the religious power-elite hold sway over governance and stifle dissent and religious and secular freedoms.

**On the other hand, representation in a secondary, watchdog chamber of government, of a widely accepted Universal Secular**

**Church, which unites all religions and non-believers, might well be deemed appropriate**.

# A New Cultural Order

I use the terms "culture" and "cultural order" in the sociological sense. They can apply to any social group, whether it be (say) the family, teenagers, an ethnic community, a factory, a school, a city, or a nation. Nowadays, and increasingly so, they also apply on a global scale. But to what do the terms refer?

In brief, I use them to refer to "the way of life" within a group. But to fully examine and describe the culture of a particular social group, one would need to look at all the social phenomena that occur within it, such as:- traditions, social norms and conventions; patterns of social division, status, class, affluence and power; religious dependency, practice and authority; leisure activities; the media; social cohesion and tension; the nature and extent of crime; welfare provision, charity and caring; materialism; etc. It would also be essential to identify the moral, racial, religious, political, economic rationales which give rise to these phenomena, and to examine at micro and macro levels, how all these factors interact and evolve and affect the behaviour, attitudes and aspirations of people. With this level of complexity, any attempt to understand and be aware of the cultural milieu of groups is bound to be incomplete and flawed, but is important because it is into cultures that children are born and conditioned, and it is cultural differences (actual and imagined) which can spawn and sustain so much inter-group rivalry, prejudice and conflict.

Given this definition, it is obvious that this whole book is about culture(s) - the way they are and the way (I suggest) they ought to be. I have, then, already made many proposals for cultural change in previous chapters. This soliloquy, therefore, has already been mostly written, but I want to think through a few more proposals and their implications, and tie up a few loose ends, in order to provide the finishing touches to this picture of a better world, which is inside my head. What follows then, is something of a hotch-potch of pieces to put into the jigsaw.

<u>Marriage/Children</u> - There is a problem with the meaning of the word "marriage". It once clearly refered to heterosexual partnerships, which were licensed and recognised by the state and in law for various purposes, including taxation, property, inheritance and child-rearing. It was also imbued with clear moral/social expectations and obligations. Nowadays, particularly in western societies, it is difficult to sort out the various practical and moral permutations which exist in partnerships and

child-rearing. The grouping of people into either married or unmarried categories (in the traditional sense), is no longer sufficient in itself, clear or appropriate. What is needed, now, is a new set of categories and definitions which take account of these permutations. They should also take account of the legitimate requirements and controls of the state and, above all, **make paramount the welfare and rights of children. The value to society, of stable, mutually supportive, adult heterosexual relationships, and their importance as the best context for conception, birth and child-rearing, should also be recognised**. The following categories attempt to present an approximate pragmatic, legal framework, which might help to achieve these aims :-

<u>Category 1. Marriage</u>  The terms "marriage" and "being married" would apply only to those couples who fulfil the conditions of this category, namely :-- (i) One adult male and one adult female voluntarily contract to live together and be seen as a partnership of equals for certain purposes;

(ii) All assets, income and financial liabilities of both partners, at the time of contract and henceforth to be pooled in joint ownership;

(iii) Joint assessment and responsibility for tax purposes;

(iv) Preferential tax rates (or benefits), compared with unmarried couples and single people, with additional benefits when there are children;

(v) Joint responsibility for any financial liabilities;

(vi) In the event of children conceived by the couple and borne within the marriage, or as the result of an external liaison, then the biological parents will automatically be contracted under Category 2;

(vii) In the event of divorce, current assets and liabilities are divided equally;

(viii) Married couples (who by definition would be heterosexual) should be given preferential, if not exclusive consideration in the fostering and adoption of children. Unmarried couples would have to demonstrate their commitment by becoming married.

The above rules reflect the importance of supporting stable heterosexual partnerships, which offer the best hope of meeting the rights of every child to be conceived and borne into a loving, stable family context. They call for a very high degree of mutual trust and dependence by both partners. They should give pause for thought to prospective

partners and serve to reinforce the strength of commitment between those who do proceed with marriage by this definition. There is every reason why they should be seen as compatible with religious marriage ceremonies and for churches to continue to be legitimate, legal venues for marriage contracting. They do not preclude the right of homosexual couples to live together, and to organise their financial arrangements as they wish, but there is no reason why the state should give tax or other benefits to such partnerships.

Every child conceived and born outside of a Category 1. marriage, will already have been denied its moral right to an optimum start in life. But it has to be faced that many children will be created irresponsibly, without putting the child's rights and welfare first. However, whatever the circumstances of its birth, it is entirely reasonable that the state should ensure that the <u>biological</u> parents of a new baby, meet their responsibilities for that which they have wrought. This might well be achieved by the following:-

<u>Category 2. Child-Contract</u>    (i) This is not a voluntary contract. It is compulsory and applies whether or not the contracting adults are "married" as in Category 1.

(ii) At the birth of a child, both biological parents must be identified and recorded. If necessary, D.N.A. testing may be called for, to establish parentage.

(iii) Whether or not they agree, both biological parents will automatically be deemed to have contracted to be jointly responsible for the <u>costs</u> of raising their child up to the age of 18 years, and for the anti-social or unlawful actions of their child upto the age of 16years. If a parent is estranged from his/her child, then he/she will still be responsible for his/her share of the costs and consequences of creating their child.

(iv) This may be revoked only if a "step - parent" contracts to take on that responsibility, although if this new contract fails, then responsibility will revert to the original biological parent.

(v) Parents and child will be registered on a state database. This, together with their life-long personal identity cards and numbers, will have many other uses, but will also help to locate and monitor parents <u>in the interests of the child</u>, until he/she is 18 years old.

(vi) If the parents are not married (Category 1), in the event that the mother is unable to meet her share of

the costs during the first five years of the child's life, or chooses not to work in order to be a full-time mother, then the father shall be liable for a greater, prescribed contribution. The state should have the power to garnishee the wages and other income of defaulters, in the interests of the child.

(vii)  To encourage the mother-infant bonding, which is so crucial to child-development, non-working mothers of 0 - 5 year-old children, shall receive vouchers, which can be exchanged for baby health-care products, certain foods, education, welfare services etc., as well as occupational re-training courses for the mother at the end of this period.

(viii) No automatic tax benefits for Category 2 adults  (unless also married as in category 1).

(ix) Education and health care for children will be underwritten and guaranteed by the state. In the event of children being deprived of food, shelter or clothing because the combined parental assets/income are inadequate, then means-related support will be given by the state. Means-assessment will not be tolerant of the costs of smoking, drinking, pets or excessive spending in other ways. State support will also be conditional on regular home visits by trained child health/social workers and on parents attending courses on parenting skills.

As before, in the event of parents defaulting on their responsibilities, the state shall have the power to garnishee the wages and other income of parents on behalf of the child and to offset state costs.

It can be seen that the above categories leave no provision for (usually anonymous) sperm or egg donation. People, who provide eggs and sperm for third-party fertility programmes, are responsible for creating children in their likeness, and must be held, in the first instance and ultimately, responsible for their future. If donors and surrogate parents wishing to create children in this way, cannot accept the burden of responsibility or the underwriting of costs, or de-facto parents cannot accept the idea of their children learning, as of right, the full facts of their origins, then it would be better if such potential parents directed their apparent longing to love and care for a child, at adopting one of the millions of children, world-wide, who die and suffer for want of those two basic rights.

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## Crime and Penal Reform

Crime and Penal Reform   If we are to truly live out the moral imperative of universal love and respect for each other, then it will not be sufficient to socialise our children accordingly, in the home, in

school and through the Universal Secular Church, whilst at the same time failing to reform the moral imperatives which shape adult institutions and behaviour. I would suggest that one measure of a civilised society is the degree of love and respect given to both the victims and the perpetrators of crime. It is clearly the entitlement of the former, but what about the latter?

In Part 1, I argued that we are all the product of our different life circumstances. Whilst we are all free to choose between different actions, the choices we make are the outcome of a variety of influences - genetic, body chemistry, socialisation (cultural), intelligence, knowledge, etc. These are general terms, which cover a vast range of factors with implications for behaviour. To repeat just two examples of socialisation - motherly-love or lack of it, and poverty have profound effects upon subsequent attitudes and behaviour. If one accepts the truth of this premise, then one must take the reasoning forward and accept that those who commit crimes are themselves victims of circumstance, and therefore also entitled to love and respect.

Now some might see such a notion as implying that the legal system should be soft on those who break the law and hurt others, and that offenders should be told, "That was not very nice. Now, in future, be a good boy." But this would be tantamount to a licence to commit further crimes and would fail to show appropriate respect for the victims of crime or for the right of society as a whole to be crime-free. Besides, such a response to crime also does not show love and respect for the offender. If the offender is to be respected, then he must be helped to rehabilitate, to learn and show contrition, to make amends for the damage and costs to his victim(s) and society, and to acquire appropriate attitudes and life skills.

Removing some offenders from society will always be necessary, for the simple but crucial reason that, for the duration of their detention, they cannot hurt others. Being deprived of one's liberty may be seen as a punishment. Indeed, the notion of punishment is seen as the legitimate moral purpose of judicial sentencing. Sometimes it is hard not to want to incarcerate some criminals and throw away the key. But, I think it is possible to make detention a positive act, carried out in the interest of the offender (as well as to protect further victims from harm), and to perceive it as an act of caring rather than punishment.

Consider these two hypothetical statements by a sentencing judge: "This was a wicked and violent crime perpetrated against an innocent old lady. You shall go to prison for 10 years. You deserve longer but that is the maximum the law allows me to impose." and "This was a

wicked and violent crime perpetrated against an innocent old lady. Your aggressive tendencies and disregard for others have made you a danger to others. I'm sure you will understand that we must protect the public from such experiences. We also want to help you to overcome your problems, so we have decided to detain you for at least 10 years, during which time you will undergo a programme of rehabilitation. This will try to meet your personal and educational needs and include training in appropriate vocational and life skills. It will also include regular and demanding paid employment, by which means you will be able to make amends and compensate your victim as well as defray some of the costs to society incurred by your actions. I hope you will welcome this opportunity to better yourself and enter into the spirit of the programme. If, in the opinion of an independent panel, you have not cooperated in the attempts to help you change for the better, then your detention will be extended to a maximum of 12 years." The second statement summarises an alternative philosophy and purpose of detention, to that of the first.

There should be (and there usually are) specified limits to the detention time that can be imposed by a court for a given offence. For repeat offenders, brought to court and found guilty, these limits should be extended and also specified. A repeat of the above offence by the same man, after release, might perhaps incur a detention of 20 years. Had he committed a lesser crime, with a specified detention of (say) 2 years, he would, as a repeat-offender, have to serve (say) 4 years. The principle of increasing the limits of sanctions on repeat offenders can be justified by virtue of the fact that previous attempts to help them have presumably failed, they have not changed for the better and society is still at risk. The balance between the need to protect the public and to help the offender will have to shift towards the former for repeat offenders.

The financial cost of dealing with specific crimes can be enormous and can include the costs of :- policing; legal aid; court hearings; detention; damage to property; stolen property; etc. A working total financial cost to society could easily be calculated. **As much of this as possible should be met by the offender.** At the very least, any fines imposed should be commensurate with this total cost and disbursed accordingly. Offenders may take years to pay off their debt. Within reason, assets should be open to expropriation. Offenders with certain mental illnesses should not be compelled to put right the wrong they have done, though of course to do so may be deemed appropriate to their rehabilitation.

Rehabilitation (together with protecting society) should always be the main operational aim of not only places of detention, but also probation, community service and fines. **The rehabilitation process**

**should include the means to make amends to immediate victims and to society**, and attempt to help the offender to improve, by meeting his medical, psychological, educational, vocational needs etc.

If one starts from the premise of helping the offender, then a range of responses to crime, suited to the individual becomes possible (in addition to making amends to victims). One rehabilitation programme might, for instance, require attendance at evening classes, counselling and weekend employment centres to pay for compensation or costs. Another might be detention for five days in seven, with two days release on community service. I am not advocating any particular strategy, merely trying to establish the principle of flexibility in strategies for caring for the offender. After all, this should also be in the best interests of society as a whole.

Having said all that, it has to be faced that some hardened criminals will not respond to such an approach, and will remain a danger to others, even in detention. They will rightly end up serving longer sentences. Even here, especially here, it should be encumbent upon the authorities to perceive their roll as a caring one. Those who opt out of institutional rehabilitation opportunities, should still be entitled to courtesy, respect and humane conditions and treatment. This will never be easy and those who have responsibility for the supervision of such criminal inmates, whilst they need to be sometimes physically tough and pragmatic, nevertheless need also to feel and show compassion towards their charges. Recruitment and in-house appraisal should allow no place for staff who regard inmates as the enemy, or punishment as the proper means of control or the purpose of detention.

This does not mean that sanctions should be banned. Strategies for dealing with unacceptable behaviour will always be necessary. But the intent and language of punishment should be absent. For example, solitary confinement might be deemed appropriate for someone who repeatedly attacks others, but it should be more a case of "Sorry Fred (or Mr.Smith) but we can't allow you to mix with the others at the moment because ... (whatever the reasons). When you've cooled down, you can have a chat with your rehab key worker to see how we can sort this out, OK?", rather than "Right Smith, two months in the cooler for you and the loss of all privileges. If you don't behave then you must expect to get punished for it."

With regard to the general philosophy and nature of life in detention centres, it is a fallacy that it is inhumane to deprive someone of free access to television or pornographic or inappropriate videos, magazines or the internet. It should not be the business of such

institutions to encourage the normalising of anti-social behaviour, to feed the anti-social preoccupations of inmates, or to extend their repertoires of anti-social ideas. It has to be recognised that media freedom can do all these things and is therefore counter-productive to the aims of detention and is a dis-service to inmates.

Besides there was and is life without the telly. There are many people who protect their children from it and lead wholesome, fulfilled, happy lives without it. There is no reason why detention centres should not offer a wide range of <u>controlled</u> media and other optional pursuits, not least appropriate newspapers, libraries, selected censored videos, radio and opportunities for sport, learning, writing and creative activities.

By the same token, spartan accommodation (within reason) is not inhumane either. Overcrowding and poor hygiene, health and diet are. There is no need for inmates to live in luxury.

Before going on, it will have occurred to the reader that if detention centres are going to be caring establishments, then two consequences may follow. Firstly they may lose some of their effectiveness as a deterrent to crime and the incidence of crime will increase. Secondly, for many offenders, detention may well offer the security, order, comfort and respect that they are unable to achieve for themselves in the outside world, and so they become institutionalised and seek to extend their stay inside. Following on from both these fears, it might be expected that the population behind bars will grow enormously and become an unacceptable financial burden on tax-paying, law-abiding citizens.

Well, to begin with, I see nothing morally wrong with spending public money on a wide network of detention centres, which exist to socialise offenders, many of whom are society's losers. We are happy enough to provide expensive universities, so that those who are already blessed by circumstance, can go on to both contribute to and receive the rewards of society. Once an offender is in detention, it is a unique opportunity for society to address the inequity, and to try to help him and thereby society at the same time. Besides, such centres will also be workplaces, factories even, and contain schools/colleges, as well as generating local employment. So, as with universities, whilst there may be a net one-way flow of tax-payers money into the centres, this will be offset by economic spin-offs generated by them. In any event, paying whatever it takes to remove criminals from society for a time, and make low incidence of crime normal, is money well-spent. Indeed, one could argue that it would be better spent than the billions of pounds (dollars etc.) spent on cigarettes, alcohol, pets and a thousand and one other non-essentials. I don't think it would happen, but if we end up with a gulag

archipelago of benevolent centres, in which large numbers of repeat offenders choose to live out their days in a secure monastic order, then I for one would be willing to contribute to the cost and would be content that society had done its best for them.

With regard to a possible increase in crime if detention is seen as no deterrent to would-be criminals, I would suggest that this would be offset by two factors. Firstly the loss of freedom would still be punitive in itself. At the moment, in Britain, its deterrent effect is much reduced because criminals know that they will be released early for "good behaviour" (or rather by avoiding bad behaviour). Under my proposals, this would not happen. If a sentence is for (say) 12 years, then the offender will serve that time, knowing that it will be extended for "bad behaviour", or for failing to respond positively to the rehabilitation programme. Secondly, assuming the caring, rehabilitative strategies of the centres bear fruit, then (hopefully) there should be a reduction in reoffending after release.

There remains the question of juvenile delinquency and crime. Here, there can be little argument against the perception that delinquents are victims of circumstance and cannot honestly be held fully responsible for their actions. They need help more than most, if they are not to embark on a lifetime of crime. On the other hand, you don't help them by simply wagging a finger, as seems the case with many delinquents dealt with under British law. They must be required to compensate their victims, to contribute to the legal costs incured by society and to undergo rehabilitation. The parents, having brought their child into the world, must share in the consequences of his actions. They cannot be held fully responsible because, despite genuine efforts on their part, other social influences can determine juvenile behaviour. Nevertheless, they are morally culpable. Parents then, should be jointly charged and dealt with alongside their offending child. Once again, there should be flexibility to ensure that "sentencing" strategies fit, not the crime so much, as the needs and circumstances of the offender. This might include anything from zero-tolerance of minor offences like litter and graffiti, to whole-family weekend rehabilitation, to parent - counselling, to father and son weekend work to pay for costs or to compensate victims, to family probation, to actual detention, etc. The permutations are endless. Above all, the rehabilitation of the child should be paramount.

But by far the most important means of preventing crime must be by removing the social causes of anti-social behaviour. The perception of the offender as victim must urge upon the state and enlightened people everywhere, the need to create the social circumstances in which all

individuals have the best possible chance of acquiring moral virtue rather than vice. And this is best achieved within a society which puts social justice (as well as legal justice) and the rights of children first. Governments, which are subject to the consent of the people, have the mandated obligation and power to lead in this regard :- to eliminate material and intellectual poverty; to constrain the excesses of the open, capitalist society; to create the conditions in which children are nurtured in a wholesome way, not least at home and school, and have hope, respect and purpose in their lives; to foster the moral virtue of responsible national and global identity and commitment  and the breaking down of subcultural, religious, racial and class apartheid within the state; to reduce the incidence and consequences of social inequity.

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Immigration - I have already suggested that all who flee persecution and seek asylum, should be registered and dealt with by a global clearing house, preferably under the auspices of a new world government or at least the United Nations. Subject to familial ties and perhaps a national willingness to take more, they should be allocated to democratic countries around the world on a strict rota/quota basis irrespective of the country in which they seek asylum. The cost of settling them into their new country should be borne by the world community. They should immediately acquire full citizenship, rights, responsibilities and nationality of their host country. In exchange, it should be encumbent upon them to embrace their new country, to integrate and not seek to establish a separate, sub-cultural community, based upon language, ethnicity, religion or former nationality. If they have suffered persecution because of religious, political, racial or ethnic bigotry, then surely they will recognise the need to live in an integrated society in which these cultural antecedents exist and may be celebrated, but are irrelevant to inter-personal relationships and social status at all levels. They owe it at least to their children and grandchildren who will be growing up as citizens of the host nation.

This does not mean that immigrants should be expected to renounce all the legacies of their roots. Far from it. If we are to respect others, we should do so whatever the differences between us. Their religion, language, dress, music, arts, literature, familial ties and traditions, etc. - some or all of these will be important to their self - perception and cannot simply be discarded at the port of entry to their new country. Besides they bring a welcome cultural infusion and cosmopolitanism to the host country, which help it to avoid becoming insular and culturally ossified in its pursuit of national identity.

Of course, freedom to leave a country, to travel abroad or to emigrate voluntarily, should be a fundamental human right, protected by world law. On the other hand, <u>entry</u> into countries for the purposes of immigration, business, tourism etc. should be a matter of individual state policy. An immigration policy might exclude economic migrants, except for people with certain skills. It might also allow (say) a one-year probationary work permit, followed by total transfer of national allegience. There should be no dual nationality, because it undermines personal commitment to both nations. A state policy might also allow the swapping of nationality with an individual in another country. This might help some asylum seekers to move from their allocated country to a prefered one, or (on (say) a 2 for 1 basis) to expedite national population policy by absorbing or shedding numbers. It might also admit partners married under Category 1 rules, with immediate full citizenship.

Whatever the policy, any immigration will bring a new cultural synthesis and the host country will be the richer for it. The host country must obviously welcome this diversity and be unequivocal in its absorption of newcomers, but it is for the newcomer to make the most adjustment and adopt a new tribal identity.

A person's nationality in law should refer only to the one country in which he has all the rights and responsibilities of citizenship (eg. voting, welfare benefits etc.) It should also be encumbent upon on a citizen to be a committed national tribal participant. If someone is granted full citizenship in (say) France, even after (say) 50 years as a Moroccan, his nationality is immediately French and no longer Moroccan, and he should switch his sense of national identity and allegience.

This perception that citizenship equals nationality, could help resolve the problems of national identity of those who are displaced within the UK. I have already expressed my sadness at the break-up of the United Kingdom into separate so-called nations. Given the pot-pourri population within these islands and all that we have been through together over hundreds of years, I would much rather we all saw ourselves as British. But within the context (and fait-accompli) of political devolution and the ascendancy of separate national agendas, why shouldn't people be able to think and say "At the moment I am English because I live and work and vote in England. I was Scottish in my early years when I lived in Glasgow. When I marry my fiance in Cardiff next year, I'll give up my job here and move there, so I'll become Welsh."

Finally, having said all the above, it has to be understood that **the immigration policy of any country must be compatible with that**

**country's need and responsibility to contribute to a better global and national future <u>by significantly reducing its own population.</u>**

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The Integrated Society: Obviously, unless the host nation is already integrated, then newcomers will be attracted to certain groups and locations. By way of example, in Britain there are many exclusive racial/ethnic/religious groups, often living in exclusive geographical areas Through a variety of exclusive cultural norms, they maintain, as normal, the perception of "the Jewish community", or "the Bangladeshi community" or " the Catholic community", etc., which, as I have said elsewhere, can be the seedbed of social division, suspicion and conflict. As they become organised, leaders, activists and lobby groups emerge, which help to reinforce the notion of "us and them" and making it more likely that individuals will be compelled to identify with an exclusive group. (If you're not with us, you're against us.)

Hopefully, with a <u>new</u> British national tribalism, we will move towards a more civilised cultural normality, in which :-

(i) British mosques, churches, synagogues and temples etc. (so long as they exist) are filled with predominantly white faces (since that is the predominant skin colour in Britain), but also with the full range of racial/ethnic origin. Now that <u>would</u> be a significant indication of social integration;

(ii)  no estates, towns or regions are perceived as black areas, or white, or Jewish, or Asian, or Moslem, etc.;

(iii) no one perceives themselves as belonging to an exclusive cultural "community", or at least, if they do, that it takes second place in their personal allegience, behind that of the national/global community, in which integration, love and mutual responsibility between <u>all</u> people are taken as normal moral perceptions;

(iv) intermarriage and child-bearing across religious/ racial/ ethnic boundaries are normal, commonplace and unnoticed;

(v)  all schools are secular and colour-blind, ethnically blind and religiously blind.

Having said all that, it has to be recognised that, where integration is failing and discrimination and inequity exist, then it may be necessary for a sub-cultural group to campaign temporarily as a "community" to achieve certain individual rights. But the intention should be to achieve integration, not to sustain or promote separateness, or to maintain on-going political power. Black sections of political parties and ethnic quotas in government, workplaces, public services etc., should be rendered unecessary in an integrated society.

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<u>Charity and the Voluntary Work Ethic</u>: As I say elsewhere, taxation is a virtue because it is a means by which individuals are able to contribute to the betterment of those in need, and to society as a whole. It is also a means of reducing social inequity when those who have more are taxed more heavily. Taxation of earned income requires the individual to devote some of his working time and effort to funding state-controlled social causes. In many countries this strategy has made possible a high quality of government, social services, national health provision, etc. But, with the best will in the world, it can never meet the full range of human need.

Fortunately, here in Britain, we enjoy an on-going tradition of voluntary charitable giving and effort, by people from all walks of life. Whether it be a simple case of mowing the lawn of the old person next door or a life-time of dedicated service to Scouting, the Samaritans, the Red Cross, or sponsoring the education of a third-world child, or donating to cancer research, Amnesty International, famine-relief, etc. etc. - the list could fill a book. From a single act of unnoticed kindness between two individuals to huge global organisations which coordinate the charity of millions, such actions are manifest evidence of the power of unselfish love and represent an enormous human resource for good.

The building blocks, on which this resource is totally dependent, reside within the hearts and minds of individuals. Unless individuals, in sufficient numbers, are motivated by a sense of love and responsibility for others, then the shaping of a better future world will be dominated by the forces of Mammon, greed, fraternal and individual self-interest. This charitable human resource cannot be taken for granted. A culture of charity, in which charity is endemic, has to be nurtured.

As always, the starting point is with the young. I have already written about the role of education  and a new Universal Secular Church in this respect. I now want to suggest an additional means by which the young may be inducted into an adult culture of charity. Briefly, it amounts to compulsory national community service for (say) one year, by youngsters aged (say) 16-18 years, but let me try to explain and justify this proposal.

Let me deal first with the reason for it to be compulsory. Well to begin with, in most countries, not only is the education of children taken to be their right, but the state has the legal right and obligation to make it compulsory. In Britain we already subject children to about eleven years of compulsory education, in which we attempt to develop the whole child - academically, physically, socially, morally and emotionally - in an

attempt to prepare them for adulthood. Within this broad aim, the principle and practice of education in civic and moral responsibility is already established and widely accepted and respected. If actual community service is a desireable constituent of this process, then including it in the compulsory education of fledgling adults will ensure that <u>all</u> of them will benefit, as of right, as is the case with their right to be taught maths or language or science. Community service then, could be simply the final year of compulsory schooling.

Next, why <u>actual</u> community service? It seems self-evident that for a future better world, youngsters need to acquire certain personal attributes which influence both individual and corporate behaviours. They might include:-

cooperation (not conflict);

tolerance, respect for others (not bigotry/prejudice);

understanding (not ignorance);

compassion, philanthropy, unselfishness (not narrow, exclusive greed/self-interest);

a sense of social responsibility (not parasitic dependency or antisocial behaviour);

etc.

How best are they likely to acquire these attributes? The old (Chinese?) saying is apposite - "I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand." For youngsters to understand and acquire the attributes of social responsibility and service, they must actually do them, practice them, experience them.

I would argue that real community service could be beneficial to the young in other ways. It could be seen as a rite of passage, a final initiation of children, in which they earn their spurs and are congratulated and accepted into the adult world. There is a lot to be said for such a recognised watershed rather than allowing the commercial world to generate a self-indulgent youth culture which stretches from about 8 to 25 years of age, and in which commercial and media hype dictate the yardsticks by which young people measure self-esteem and status among their peers.

It would be important for youngsters to experience service in a variety of places and contexts. For example, one participant might serve time in (say) a hospital, a school, a nursing home, a conservation field project, a farm, a charity's office. It would also be important that they receive an element of training in each situation and do real work, which is appreciated and valued. For many, such service will take them into realms of experience which are alien to them and their social background. They will meet all sorts of adults, some of whom will be seen as role

models, with skills and commitment to others. They will meet people with physical, mental and emotional need. They will help to clean, manage and protect the environment, and they will discover things about themselves for the first time. A year's service in the real world would certainly be a formative experience and could be invaluable to a youngster in bridging the world of school, childhood and dependency with the world of work, adulthood, and moral/social responsibility. It could offer the best chance to help <u>all</u> youngsters to graduate from the confusion and turbulence of adolescence and achieve maturity and a purpose in life. For young minds, such service could be a truly growing-up experience.

Of course children can and should also benefit as <u>recipients</u> of adult voluntary effort. Life in so many countries is complex and problematic. For those children who carry the added burdens of neglect, deprivation and abuse, the problems of growing up are compounded further. Juvenile casualties are inevitable and legion. In addition to state-funded social provision, highly motivated voluntary effort is largely focused on picking up the pieces. There are, of course, wonderful voluntary organisations, like Scouting, with high moral aims, which try to help children grow and prevent casualties. Many of them are religiously exclusive and their raison d'etre is indoctrination and recruitment, rather than the higher moral purpose of unconditional altruism, but they all do excellent work against the odds.

Media and commercial interests construct and sustain an exclusive child/youth culture, which celebrates hedonism but marginalises the formative influence of concerned adults. But it should be the other way round. It is in the face-to-face relationships with sympathetic, empathetic, caring adults that children and young people are best able to acquire the charitable attributes ( as well as the whole range of knowledge, social skills, self-confidence, self-esteem etc.) which they will need as adults. **Significant adults are crucial in the lives of juveniles.** They should not be there simply in a remedial capacity but should actively involve and induct young people into all aspects of adult life. It begins in the home, where parents can include children in the gardening, shopping, cooking, DIY, adult social interaction, etc. Children's clubs, whilst being mainly child-centred, should have an adult dimension, both in the quality and friendship of adult leaders, as well as aiming to bring the children into contact with the wider adult community. Adult organisations, clubs and societies should have a child dimension which involves young people appropriately in the full range of activities - from stamp collecting to mountain walking, from model trains to amateur dramatics - the potential is considerable.

If the socialisation of children bears fruit, it will help to construct and sustain a national cultural tradition of mutual responsibility and voluntary service which, in turn, might find expression in voluntary service overseas for <u>all</u> the world's young adults, and which blossoms further in the twilight years of retirement, when freedom from the demands of careers and families releases the latent energy and skills of the elderly in the service of others, brings fulfilment and purpose to their lives and, incidentally, thereby making them an indispensible social / economic asset.

On a national scale, charity and service benefit society enormously. On an international scale, peace, equity and human fellowship cannot be achieved without it.

Having espoused the virtue of charitable giving and effort, it is necessary to also recognise their dependence on the virtues of science, technology, production and employment. These are virtuous because they are the constituents of a thriving economy and provide the opportunity for self-help, which reduces the need for charity, but also provides the means by which so much charity becomes possible.

The hungry cannot feed the hungry. The Good Samaritan could not help the Levite without the means to bind his wounds and pay for his care. The impoverished cannot provide the money, transport, equipment and skills to relieve (say) the victims of disaster. Bare hands and good intentions can be extremely valuable, but are not usually sufficient.

**These two virtues, charity and the pursuit of economic advancement through work, are synonamous with the synthesis of responsible capitalism and a socialist conscience, which I mentioned earlier. Together they provide a pragmatic moral framework on which the actions of individuals, business and governments can be based, to the benefit of all humankind**.

# Conclusion

At the beginning of this book, I invited the reader to share with me its message of hope. Simply writing these thoughts is a symptom of hope, for to do so assumes that things not only must, but also 'can" be changed for the better. Even so I must confess that my hope is not unqualified because it cannot ignore the enduring fallibility of man.

The pessimist in me  realises that my hypothetical solutions to global problems are probably unrealistic. For example :-

(i) The power, survival and expansion of religious institutions, depends heavily on the psychological dependency indoctrinated into their captive young. They are unlikely to enthusiastically waive their assumed right to do this, or to embrace the right of children to be raised with open, freethinking, enquiring minds, or to jump into bed with a new Universal Secular Church.

(ii)  The cancerous tenacity of religious fundamentalism around the world is frightening to say the least. History has shown that such human gullibility can imprison communities, even whole generations in intellectual and social darkness. At this time in history, Islamic fundamentalism in particular may get a lot worse before it gets better, particularly wherever it seeks or achieves political power.

(iii) It may well be that competitive international free-market economics and the power of transnational companies are now irreversible, and the development of protectionist, autonomous economies for all nation - states very unlikely.

(iv) The idea that global cooperation could defy historical precedent and quickly blossom and spawn even a limited World Government, recognised by all nation - states, is probably pie in the sky.

(v) Strategies for coping with the expanding world population continue to focus on increasing food production rather than on planned population - reduction. Consequently the process of population growth and global attrition, in which millions upon millions of humans as well as the planet are already laid waste, could well drag on and on, and not be resolved with the urgency it requires. If you are one of those millions, hope is a luxury enjoyed by the rich. For you the sands of time have already run out. You don't need hope. You need action NOW!

(vi) I confess to being ignorant, helpless and filled with apprehension when it comes to controlling the potential

for evil of modern global communications technology, as well as the potential for human suffering and turmoil arising from global warming. Perhaps these are more urgent problems, and render the issues I have raised as yesterday's agenda, or no more than surface-scratching. I hope not.

On the other hand, the optimist in me senses winds of change which give me reason for hope. For example :-

(a) Hurt and harm, vice and suffering are always accompanied by paradox, because they have the potential to evoke virtue. People can be moved by (say) the plight of victims of circumstance. This happens, when they perceive it and their conscience is pricked. This, of course, is not new, but what is new is that public awareness of issues of conscience is increasingly commonplace. In addition to the simple growth of charitable giving, aided by communications technology and some sympathetic media support, well - organised professional and voluntary lobby groups are now beginning to be very effective in mounting local and international campaigns, which challenge consciences and influence public opinion. In turn, when aroused, popular public opinion has demonstrated its willingness and power to influence government and commercial policy. Nowadays, words like "ethical, sustainable, environmental, human rights, accountability, transparency" occur frequently in political and economic debate.

(b) It has taken a couple of thousand years, but at last there are indications that the major religious power blocks are responding to the pragmatic need for inter-faith collaboration, (albeit perhaps to fight their common enemy - secularism). They are beginning to mutter words of reconciliation between themselves. Even the ageing Pope Jean Paul II, saw fit to think the unthinkable. Before he died he still called upon his flock to pro-create and to convert believers in other faiths to Roman Catholicism, but nevertheless sought to apologise for some of his church's sordid violations of human rights, and made encouraging remarks about inter - faith dialogue and co - existence.

At the grass - roots level, inter - faith action groups are quietly establishing the principle that all humans can and must be friends, without allowing the mutual blasphemy, heresy and exclusivity of their faiths to spoil things, as they have in the past. I also hope that if such groups bring their differences out into the open, they will be a spawning ground for the search for truth, since it must become apparent to those who think, that they can't all be right and that they themselves may be wrong. Doubt and questioning of different prescribed superstitions, can only be a good thing, if truth and reconciliation are to be truly achieved.

Another progressive milestone would be if "inter-faith action" became "inter-faith <u>and</u> non-faith action", and (say) Humanists were invited in.

(c) I take comfort from : - (i)  the greater willingness of some media (in Britain at least) to expose religious hypocricy, prejudice, child abuse, abuse and inequality of women, and other religious vices that have previously been hidden;

(ii)  a trend towards parity of esteem of agnostic, Humanist and informed secular reason with that of religion;                           (iii) The greater willingness of Christians to question or reject the morality of imposed priest - celibacy, male domination, dictats on contraception and abortion, and the albeit reluctant accommodation made by some churches to these secular demands. In the face of such secular trends, (again) even the Roman Catholic Church is showing signs of reconstructing God's will in these matters, albeit in the interests of institutional survival.

(d) With the exception of some obvious notorious malingerers, it does seem that the latter decades of the 20th century saw the ascendancy of democracy around the world. The demise of totalitarianism has been driven to a large extent by the aspirations of people for the material success of free market capitalism, as well as by the powerful weapons of war and greater military brinkmanship of the western democracies. But a big factor has also been the power of global communication technologies to spread the message of freedom, and this process can only become more widespread. As I have argued, democratic, open societies, which are constrained by socialist morality, offer the best chance of creating a better future for all.

(e) The as yet imperfect capacity and willingness of the United Nations to construct global conventions on human rights and the environment, to act as a global law enforcer, and to resolve international and internecine conflict, amounts to an encouraging evolution towards eventual world government.

I realise that what I have written is a superficial, probably naive, opinionated collection of personal perceptions. I would not claim it to be otherwise. I have merely tried to record my own moral and practical rationales for change and future action. They are tentative, not cast in stone, and as I said at the beginning, they are simply a contribution to the osmosis of debate.

Hopefully readers will be moved to add some meat to the superficiality and consider in greater depth the plausibility and ramifications of what I propose, even if that should result in them discounting the whole thesis. It would be better still, if my fellow earth-

dwellers, particularly the young, are encouraged by this book to remove the blinkers which control their perception, to open their minds to their world, to share their soliloquy with others and to campaign for a caring society and better future for all mankind - and to question and challenge the overt and hidden agendas and influence of exclusive, self - interested fraternities and institutions.

If just one of my sentences gives the reader pause for thought, then, through the cascade of cause and effect, I will have influenced the future. **My hope is that the children of today will achieve a tomorrow, in which religious, political, economic and cultural activity is commensurate with global harmony, environmental sustainability, the protection of the natural world, low human population numbers, social justice, and the fellowship, happiness and prosperity of all**.

# Appendix
## Some Essential Skills
## which should be taught, practised and assessed in schools

Many of the skills listed are interdependent and overlap. Teaching methods must obviously take account of this.

**Reading skills** - reading for information, skimming, scanning, analysis, precis, habitual reading for pleasure, efficient use of reference books, thesauri, dictionaries, directories, catalogues etc.

**Writing skills** - writing in appropriate ways for different purposes, eg. instruction, description, explanation, information, entertainment, promotion, justification, summary, conveying and evoking emotion, fictional narrative, letters, essays, reports, applications, etc.

- writing for different audiences, eg. children, students, experts in a particular field, lay people in a particular field, consumers, friends, businesses, prospective employers, etc.

- spelling, syntax, grammar, vocabulary, alphabetical ordering, hand writing, etc.

**Speaking skills** - articulacy, public speaking, debate, narration, speaking for different audiences, story-telling, story-reading aloud, etc.

**Listening skills** - concentration span, focussing on salient content, committing to memory, note-taking, etc.

**Mental skills** - memory and recall, curiosity, analysis , decision - making, weighing evidence, problem - solving, creativity (eg. in language, arts, technology, design), classifying, scepticism based on reason, planning, evaluating, etc. (A particularly useful approach to mental skills is that of Edward de Bono, in his book "Teaching Thinking", 1976, pub. Maurice Temple Smith Ltd.) - arithmetic, using and constructing graphs, tables, charts, maps and statistics, financial planning, budgeting, etc.– logic.

**Computer skills** - research, setting up and using databases, spreadsheets etc., keyboard and wordprocessor skills , graphics and computer - aided design, internet and e-mail use, commercial transactions, etc.

**Social skills** - empathy, respect, consideration and charitable attitude towards others, cooperative participation with others in shared tasks and experiences,  moral perception, civic and global citizenship,  etc.

**Practical life-skills** - cooking, hygiene, domestic finance, diet, basic DIY, road safety, sewing, keeping fit, etc.